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THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT ON A THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION:
CASE STUDIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF DIVINITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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EDINBURGH
SCOTLAND
2011

DECLARATION

I declare that:

- a. this thesis has been composed by myself;
- b. the work is my own;
- c. the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Leah E. Robinson

ABSTRACT

The Influence of Social Context on a Theology of Reconciliation: Case Studies in Northern Ireland.

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The theology of reconciliation, as it applies to God's relationship with humanity, has been studied extensively throughout ecclesial history. Currently, theologians are expanding this research to include the "horizontal" element of reconciliation, or the implications of God's relationship with humanity on human to human relations. This dissertation further examines the development of the horizontal understanding of the theology of reconciliation in the context of two Christian reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland, the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities. This is attempted by exploring the use of the concepts most commonly associated with the theology of reconciliation, truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness, as interpreted through past publications of Cornerstone and Corrymeela and in interviews with current members. This study illustrates, through the use of a theology of reconciliation model, how the social context moves one's theological beliefs between a focus on liberating tendencies (justice and truth) and reconciling tendencies (repentance and forgiveness). The result of this analysis show that within both Communities, throughout the years of the Troubles to now, it has been possible to map a movement between a focus on reconciling and liberating tendencies that correlates to the stability of the social context. Implications for further study include: creating a clearer definition of the theology of reconciliation, exploring the theology of reconciliation within other conflict-ridden areas, and working to establish the theology of reconciliation as existing under the umbrella of traditionally understood local theology.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION¹

“If ever there was a theological theme that had to be developed in relation to the world in all its agony and hope, this [reconciliation] is that theme.”²

Introduction to the Research Question

The interest in Jesus’ death on the cross and what it means for humanity is as old as Christianity itself. From the beginning, those who have called themselves Christian have contemplated the idea of the atonement and what it means for humanity’s relationship with God. The theology of reconciliation has been analysed by some of the greatest scholars of the past generations. Post World War II, however, the focus on the theology of reconciliation began to shift from a heavily doctrinal view to one that concentrated more on the social realm of Christian life. With the emergence of various intra-national conflicts throughout the world such as Israel-Palestine, South Africa and Northern Ireland, it became clear that theology could no longer reside within the safe walls of academia. Christianity needed to find its position amidst the turmoil and secure a place in communities in conflict.

Like many branches within theology that began to emerge during this time, such as Liberation Theology, literature concerning the social aspect of the theology of reconciliation began to develop in countries that were suffering from conflictual states. South Africa is one example of this development. Theologians in this context took elements from the theology of reconciliation and, in a practical form, established the country’s Truth and Reconciliation

¹ All biblical references are from the *New Revised Standard Version: Anglicized Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1995.

² John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 28.

Commission. This, along with the African concept of Ubuntu theology, which emphasises the importance of the interconnectedness of humankind, led to the development of a social theology of reconciliation that has been analysed and written about with varied perspectives from scholars such as John W. De Gruchy.³

Social issues in Latin America and the former Yugoslavia have also influenced research into local understandings of the idea of a theology of reconciliation. Researchers such as José Comblin⁴ and David Tombs⁵ have wrestled with the ideas of reconciliation in the Latin American context, specifically in the theology of reconciliation's connection to the established understanding of Liberation Theology. From a Croatian perspective, Miroslav Volf has studied the importance of the use of a theology of reconciliation in areas of conflict. Volf has focused primarily on identity and the "other" within his works.⁶

Another volatile region where the social aspects of the theology of reconciliation are being used practically is Northern Ireland, which will serve as the social context for this research. With the development of religious reconciliation communities, both before and after the "Troubles,"⁷ the theology of reconciliation emerged as a guiding belief to a practical attempt at national reconciliation. The difference between Northern Ireland and South Africa, however, is that very few people have analysed the understanding of reconciliation from a theological point of view in the Northern Ireland context. The works that have discussed the theology of

³ John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

⁴ See José Comblin, "The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America," in *Reconciliation, Nations and Churches in Latin America*, ed. Iain S. McClean (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 135-70.

⁵ David Tombs, "The Theology of Reconciliation and the Recovery of Memory Project in Guatemala," in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 85-99.

⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁷ A volatile time period in the history of Northern Ireland. Typically seen as beginning around 1969 and tentatively ending at the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. For further explanation see Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 75.

reconciliation are marked with the same criticism that professor of peace, justice and conflict studies, Joseph Liechty offers:

In Northern Ireland, work towards reconciliation long preceded careful reflection on the meaning and dynamics of reconciliation. As reflection began to emerge, it revealed shared themes and understandings, but considerable confusion as well. Even work of real value can betray less than careful understandings of the elements of reconciliation and the relationship between them, if not outright confusion.⁸

As Liechty goes on to state: “Wherever reconciliation is addressed, a jumble of terms is likely to emerge, with forgiveness, repentance, apology, justice, truth, peace and of course reconciliation itself being among the most common ingredients of the reconciliation stew.”⁹

The common “jumble” that Liechty speaks of is the wide variety of understanding that people have for the word reconciliation and likewise the theology of reconciliation. Theologians have always been keen on diverse thought, but the theology of reconciliation is a different case altogether. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find any literature on the theology of reconciliation that comes close to an agreement on its definition. Accordingly, discussion on the social elements of a theology of reconciliation has been largely avoided in academia.

In the past few decades scholars such as Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter have presented the idea of local theology, or the understanding that social aspects prove to be an important influence on a person’s theology.¹⁰ Schreiter contends that there are many elements that are present in the social context that affect theology, such as geography, family, friends,

⁸ Joseph Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place: The Dynamics of Reconciliation,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 59.

⁹ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59.

¹⁰ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (1987; repr., Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 1.

and church tradition.¹¹ I believe this concept of local theology is of great importance when examining the diverse nature of literature on the theology of reconciliation, especially with works that are born out of places suffering from social conflict and turmoil. My research question, therefore, is: How does social context influence the development of a theology of reconciliation? This question will be explored within the social context of Northern Ireland.

Importance of Study

It is easy in academics to claim that research is important for reasons ranging from the fact that an idea has never been studied before to the need to further past research on a subject to the understanding that research in a certain area might be important on a global scale. My claim with this study is a little bit of all of these things. I do think that the theology of reconciliation, on a social level, has not been explored extensively from a contextual point of view. It has been looked at by a variety of scholars who defined reconciliation according to their respective contexts and they have, in this form, applied it to other contexts. I can see how this would do a great injustice to reconciliation as, for example, it would never be assumed that Liberation Theology in its Latin American understanding would be completely suitable to the African-American context. With the idea that reconciliation should be contextualised, there is also the acknowledgement that this study will be furthering the work that has already been completed in the area of the theology of reconciliation. The theology of reconciliation is certainly not a new idea among theologians, but most would agree that continued work in this area is important. Finally, the word *reconciliation* on a global scale has not been without its share of controversy. As this study will show, reconciliation has not always been seen as a

¹¹ Schrieter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 22-38.

beneficial means of bringing two groups of people together who are in conflict. I see this as being an issue of clarity amongst differing understandings of reconciliation and the resulting practical application of these understandings, as mentioned previously by Joseph Liechty in his discussion of the reconciliation stew. With clarity comes legitimacy, and I think that the theology of reconciliation is more contextually nuanced than what has been assigned to it in the past. My goal through this study, therefore, is to try and interpret the theology of reconciliation through the eyes of those who are living in Northern Ireland and working in the field of reconciliation studies. This will offer a contextualised version of reconciliation, but it will also, in theory, offer general insights into the way that this theological concept might be interpreted in other social contexts.

Methodology

Research methods vary according to the subject at hand, so I had to assemble what I believed to be the best way to build a foundation from which I could explore a research question that centred on the theology of reconciliation within the social context of Northern Ireland. I began my studies accordingly, desiring to become better equipped in the history and development of the theology of reconciliation by way of a literature review. I chose a literature review because of my desire to understand the way that the theology of reconciliation had previously been understood by theologians. At the same time I wanted to gather what had been said about the theology of reconciliation and likewise what had not been said. Working through the numerous texts on the subject, I attempted to put together a comprehensive introduction to the theology of reconciliation while at the same time acknowledging the multitude of opinions

therein. Through the use of my literature review I was able to produce a new model on the theology of reconciliation that was based on previous research by scholars in this area of study. This model was used throughout my research as a means of analysing the social context's influence on the theology of reconciliation.

With this knowledge in hand, I then began to explore the social context of my case study through examining the history of Northern Ireland. Both the history of Northern Ireland and my previous explorations in the theology of reconciliation made me realise just how difficult a project I was undertaking. The history of Northern Ireland varies dramatically between researchers, and even the use of certain words over others gives away a writer as being on one side or the other of the divide. This is the main reason that I titled my chapter on the history of Northern Ireland as “A” history, not “The” history, of the region. My conclusions, and admitted confusion, after my initial research into the two main areas of my overarching question confirmed my need for clarification through field research.

Field Research

With my literature reviews on the theology of reconciliation and the history of Northern Ireland as resources I began to plan my field research. My goal in this research was to try to find a diverse group of people to observe and interview, whilst maintaining my framework of theology in Northern Ireland. My field research began in March 2009 and lasted until July 2009. I knew that although I had completed a history of Northern Ireland from academic sources, I wanted to learn more about the region from those who live and work there. The perfect combination of learning about Northern Ireland, reconciliation and theology came about

in the form of religious reconciliation communities who specialise in Christian, cross-community work.

During my time in Northern Ireland I lived in Belfast and Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, and was able to spend three weeks living with both the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities.¹² These two Communities were chosen because, within the realm of reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland, they vary considerably in their location, aims, membership and size and thus served as two independent groups that could be compared and contrasted. My three weeks spent with Corrymeela and Cornerstone allowed me to fully participate in the life and activities of each of the Communities. From my research into the history of Northern Ireland I knew that gaining information about the Troubles from interviewees could be difficult. Citizens of Northern Ireland are notorious for being guarded concerning the events of this time period. I tried, therefore, to live within the two Communities for as long as possible before conducting interviews, so as to establish myself as someone who is genuinely interested in the work of reconciliation in Northern Ireland and also to gain a sense of each Community and how it operated. Choosing participant observation meant that I could better understand the inner-workings of both of the Communities and likewise to be able to grasp how those within each Community went about expressing their theology of reconciliation in a practical way. Observations from this research are recorded in a journal and are listed as a reference under the name “Field Notes.”

I made the decision early on in my research that once in Northern Ireland I would conduct semi-structured interviews. This was a purposeful choice, as I wanted there to be some degree of freedom in the conversation for the interviewees to share what they believed to be

¹² To help with clarity any references to “Community” will refer to the Cornerstone or Corrymeela Community. This is to aid in distinguishing this entity from the local “community.”

important information concerning their backgrounds and beliefs. I was aware, however, that in order to explore my research question I needed the interviewees to answer some specific questions concerning the theology of reconciliation. Accordingly, I did use an interview guide with questions that would keep the interview on track. These questions can be found in Appendix One.

It was in my time living within the Communities and in the months that followed that I interviewed fourteen people: six in the Corrymeela Community, seven in the Cornerstone Community and one in the Forthspring Inter-Community Group. I attempted to gather a diverse range of opinions from both Communities and thus chose participants that differed in age, sex, and religious affiliation. The final selection of those interviewed was composed of six women and seven men. Of those interviewed, six identified themselves as Protestant, two grew up in mixed Protestant and Catholic marriages and thus felt associated with both groups, and five saw themselves as Catholic.¹³ The ages of those interviewed ranged from mid twenties to late seventies. All of those interviewed were associated with their respective Communities in differing ways ranging from member to Community Leader. Descriptions of those interviewed can be found on the “Interview by Author” section on page 368.

One common aspect amongst those interviewed is that they all are originally from Northern Ireland, with the exception of one interviewee who is from the Republic of Ireland but moved to Northern Ireland in the 1980s. The reasoning behind this common detail was a desire to better understand the Northern Ireland context from those who grew up in the area as opposed to those who moved to the area later. Along with staying true to the Northern Ireland

¹³ Johnston Price was interviewed concerning the history of Forthspring Inter-Community Group because of a lack of written information. He is included in the interview list, but not in the overall demographics.

context I felt as though the interviewees could offer unique historical perspectives on the time period of the Troubles.

The interviews themselves took place in an area designated by each person and lasted between an hour to an hour and a half and were later transcribed into a document labeled “Interview by Author.”¹⁴ All interviewees signed a research ethics declaration that granted permission to use their interviews and observations in my research with the exception of direct quotes, which had to be approved by the interviewee prior to use. Their interviews are cited as “Interview by Author” in the text. The option of anonymity was offered to all those interviewed but was declined by all interviewees. The Research Ethics Declaration and copies signed by the interviewees can be found in Appendix Two.

My main goal in both my participant observation and my semi-structured interviews was to clarify a seemingly confusing history of Northern Ireland, figure out an exact definition of the theology of reconciliation and to see the theology of reconciliation through the eyes of those who were working within the local community. I will accept that only my last goal was achieved, as during my field research I discovered that what I was compiling was not one history of Northern Ireland or an exact definition of the theology of reconciliation, but a multitude of perspectives that offered personal insights into the work of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. These personal perspectives became important sections in my chapters on the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Community respectively. At the end of my field research I began to have a better view of what the structure of my overall thesis would be. This structure is reflected in the following sections.

¹⁴ This document was then divided into two separate documents labeled “Interview by Author: Cornerstone-Corrymeela.”

Structure

Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation will begin with an introduction to the theology of reconciliation. This chapter will guide the reader from the scriptural references to reconciliation, to its doctrinal developments, also examining current research in the area. The final section of this chapter will offer an understanding of the theology of reconciliation that will be used as a theological model for the rest of the research.

Chapter Three will begin a discussion on the particular social context in this research, Northern Ireland, by retracing the history of the conflict from the time of St. Patrick. It will take the reader from this time period to the present and highlight key historical moments within the region. Early history will be discussed in so much as it is connected to the division in the region, but the chapter's primary focus will be on the more violent time period of the Troubles (1969-peace process). This history will take the reader up until 2009 where it will discuss the current political situation in Northern Ireland. At the end of this chapter there will be a brief summary on the current use of reconciliation on a national and local level.

Chapters Four and Five will offer a comprehensive corporate history of the Corrymeela Community and the Cornerstone Community, two religious reconciliation communities within Northern Ireland which will serve as case studies for this research. The history of both Communities will be based on literature, interviews, and participant observation. Following the corporate history there will be individual sections on certain key figures within both Corrymeela and Cornerstone. These sections will give personal perspectives on life within the Northern Ireland context and likewise the influence of the context on personal theological beliefs.

Chapter Six ties all the different strands of the research project into one final analysis. This chapter begins by summarising my findings of the influence of the social context on the theological beliefs of Corrymeela and Cornerstone. This summary examines the history of both Communities and shows, using the theology of reconciliation model provided in Chapter Two, the movements between reconciling and liberating tendencies in Corrymeela and Cornerstone.

Chapter Seven will conclude this thesis. It will contain a brief overview of the findings of the overall research project and will discuss possible discoveries about how the social context influences the development of a theology of reconciliation. Included in this chapter are implications of the research and possible future study.

With an idea of the structure of my thesis as a guideline, I began my writing process. This held its own complications, as I soon realised the difficulties of creating research from a Northern Ireland perspective that did not reflect my preference for a particular side in the divided region. What this required, ultimately, was an understanding of the definitions and labels of the local area and likewise an acknowledgement of the assumptions and limitations within my research.

Definitions and Labels

In the writing-up process of my thesis it became apparent that the idea of Northern Ireland shares a great deal with the concept of reconciliation. They are both contested, they are both either hated or loved, and they are above all deeply personal. This is best seen, perhaps, in the way in which those interviewed understood Catholic and Protestant history, respectively. It is a common task amongst those who do research in Northern Ireland to pick certain words to

describe geographical areas and political parties. This choice, in the Northern Ireland context, defines a person. My choices were made out of necessity, but will hopefully offer a low level of contentiousness amongst those who read this research. I have used this method of referring to Londonderry-Derry and the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement. I have capitalised Republican, Nationalist, Loyalist and Unionist, so as to offer equal respect to all political and social beliefs. Labels such as Republican and Nationalist or Loyalist and Unionist are often used interchangeably in research on Northern Ireland, which can be confusing for a reader. It should be noted, therefore, that I have used Nationalist and Unionist to refer to political affiliations held by the general public or politicians, whereas Republican and Loyalist will often refer to those who are actively pursuing these political affiliations, the extreme of these pursuits being paramilitaries. I refer to the region only as Northern Ireland and not Ulster, which seems to be a more internationally agreed upon way of acknowledging this area. I also refer to the Republic of Ireland, which again seems to be more internationally agreed upon than other alternatives such as The Free State. My hope in using these words is not to assume a state of neutrality, but to prevent unnecessary distractions, confusion or offense that can result from unexplained uses of terms associated with Northern Ireland.

Along with historical problems associated with labels of geographical places or political parties in Northern Ireland is the wide variety of definitions associated with reconciliation. *Justice, truth, repentance and forgiveness*, along with the ever-present reconciliation, are frequently referenced in this work, especially in my literature review. I have not tried to define these words, withstanding placing them in a model as the four key concepts within a theological understanding of reconciliation. Instead, I have tried to show the way that those who were

interviewed viewed these concepts through my theology of reconciliation model.¹⁵ My goal with this model is that it will aid in interpreting the views of those interviewed and will offer a baseline view on the theology of reconciliation that will display the ways the social context has influenced theological beliefs.

The Field of Practical Theology

It is important within the methodology of this research to place it firmly in the field of practical theology. This is necessary because the questions asked within this work as well as the methods used to answer them are centred on practices created by those who have previously studied the connection between theology and elements of the political, ethical, psychological, sociological and pastoral.¹⁶ Practical theologians John Swinton and Harriet Mowat define practical theology as the, “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”¹⁷ Both Swinton and Mowat describe four key methods of research in the area of practical theology, and in the following pages I will show how these methods tie into my own work.

First, Swinton and Mowat suggest that any research attempted in the area of practical theology must be critical. The assumption according to Swinton and Mowat is that practical theology is, on one hand, descriptions of the practices within the Church by people of faith. In order for those practices to remain faithful to the Gospel, however, there must be critical

¹⁵ This is in addition to the literature review on the theology of reconciliation found in Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation.

¹⁶ Disciplines that are discussed in conjunction with theology in John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 4.

¹⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 6.

evaluations of “accepted assumptions and practices.”¹⁸ Another important understanding of the critical notion of practical theology is the idea that, “questions we ask of scripture and theological traditions always emerge from some context.”¹⁹ From my own research perspective both of these understandings of the critical nature of practical theology are important. In one sense, I am entering into two reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland as an outsider with my own particular context in order to ask critical questions concerning the theological beliefs and practices of those who work therein. On the other hand, I am also asking that those who are working within the reconciliation communities evaluate their own context and how it might be influencing their theology and practices. Overall there is an understanding that through critical interpretation of the theological beliefs and practices of both of the Communities there will be a better picture of ways that their theological practices have changed throughout their respective histories. This research will also serve as a means by which those within the Community might evaluate their future and for me as a researcher to comment on their practices.

Second, according to Swinton and Mowat, practical theology is concerned with theological reflection.²⁰ Practical theology has been criticised in the past for focusing on subjects like sociology and psychology while placing theology as secondary. This is a false representation of practical theology, according to Swinton and Mowat, as they believe that theology should always be the foundation from which practical theologians reflect.²¹ My research holds true to this belief, as the discussions on the practical theological work the Communities undertake will be built on the foundation of a chapter dedicated to the historic theological developments of reconciliation. This foundation will be used to create a means by

¹⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 6-7

¹⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7.

²⁰ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7.

²¹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7.

which to examine the practical application of the theology of reconciliation in the Northern Ireland context, and as such will keep the research theologically grounded.

Third, practical theology is related and oftentimes similar to the work of those in the world outside of the Christian faith, according to Swinton and Mowat.²² They state: "...we live in God's creation, all human beings, implicitly or explicitly, participate in the unfolding historical narrative of God."²³ Accordingly, it is in some occasions difficult to distinguish between work that has a theological basis and that which does not. Practical theology looks to examine those works which, though similar in nature to secular undertakings, are distinctively Christian in spirit. A good example of this within my own research is tracing the political understanding of reconciliation within the Northern Ireland context through Chapter 3: A History of Northern Ireland. Throughout the years political reconciliation has proven to be vastly different than the theological understanding, despite claims at a local level that their practices are similar. It is important, therefore, that the distinct theological background of the work of Cornerstone and Corrymeela be brought to the surface and explored. Proving that the work Cornerstone and Corrymeela are doing is theologically based and does not have hidden political agendas could aid in the local public seeing the Communities as being legitimate and influential.

Finally, the hope of practical theologians is that through their work there might be inspiration for "faithful"²⁴ practice that is centred on the Gospel. I maintain that I have remained honest and ethical concerning the field research and interviews that took place in Corrymeela and Cornerstone. Accordingly, I do have aspirations that this work might serve as a mirror for the Communities. The desirable result of this mirroring effect is that the Communities may see

²² Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7-8.

²³ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 8.

²⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 9.

in what ways they might adjust their practice in the future to maintain a faithful representation of the theology of reconciliation.

Assumptions and Limitations

The methodology behind this study makes a variety of assumptions both from a theological and social perspective. Theologically speaking, this work is based heavily on the understanding of the Protestant liberalism movement within theology. Liberal theology, generally speaking, stated that theology must acknowledge modern scenarios. Theologians Ed L. Millar and Stanley J. Grenz describe liberal theology: “The liberal program involved the rejection of the unquestioned, absolute right of church tradition or church hierarchy to determine the pattern of theology. In their place, the liberals elevated the right of the individual to criticise and reconstruct traditional beliefs.”²⁵ This theological understanding has many facets; more than can be discussed in this research, but the overall idea that is used within this study is the understanding that personal theological belief is influenced by one’s social context. The connection between the social and the theological has been debated by many contemporary theologians such as Karl Barth. It is, therefore, worth noting that this research will be continuously based on the work of those liberal theologians who developed their own views on the importance of the social realm within the area of theology.

Limitations on certain areas of this research are present and should be discussed prior to a reading of this work. Chapter Two offers some indications of research that has occurred in the theology of reconciliation, but it is not a complete literature review on the subject. Chapter

²⁵ Ed L. Millar and Stanley J. Grenz, *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 202.

Three begins at the time period when Christianity was theoretically first brought to Ireland through St. Patrick. The conflict in Northern Ireland, however, can be traced further back than this time period. Beginning a history of Northern Ireland at some point was necessary, and as this study is on the theological aspects of reconciliation, it seemed that St. Patrick might serve as an appropriate starting point. Chapters Four and Five are reflections on the case studies of the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities, though it is acknowledged that they do not reflect the complete view of both Communities, just those of the interviewees, my own observations, and selected literature. Along with the limited perspective from these Communities comes the assumption that I, as a researcher, am also interpreting their theological beliefs for my research. Chapter Six is a discussion, ultimately, about the social context's influence on the theology of reconciliation in Cornerstone and Corrymeela based upon their words and literature as I have interpreted it. Interpreting any type of field research is always a limitation, but the hope is that I have portrayed the interviewees ethically and accurately.²⁶

Perhaps the greatest limitation in my study is that I was only able to spend five months in Northern Ireland. It would take a lifetime to fully understanding the complexities of the situation in this area, and several lifetimes before I would feel equipped to make comment on what has been deemed as the "Northern Irish Problem." Therefore this study, in theory, will reflect what I observed as being the thoughts on reconciliation from those I came into contact with who have lived in Northern Ireland their whole life, who represent different members of the population, and thus have a greater authority to speak on the subject of reconciliation than someone who has come into this context for a short period of time.

²⁶ I have adhered to the University of Edinburgh research ethics and have also given the interviewees their respective quotes to approve which I believe will aid in accurate interpretations.

Finally, what I do acknowledge as a limitation, despite the desire to accurately depict the situation in Northern Ireland, is an understanding that my own social context will inevitably influence my work. My social context, which on a national level has seen the United States engaged in war since my birth, has created a strong desire to understand the nuances of reconciliation and to pursue non-violence. On a local level, my social context reflects an atmosphere of the theologically conservative, small towns of the southern United States. The influence of this conservative theology, most notably in aspects such as biblical inherency and the rejection of women in ministry, created a desire to seek an understanding of theology that I saw as more reflective of a liberated theology. This led me towards works within liberal theology. I was particularly drawn to the theological movements traditionally associated with liberal theology, such as Feminist, Black and Liberation Theology.²⁷

This understanding of my social context is necessary to consider in an assumptions and limitations section, as it shows that many of my assertions concerning theology are linked to my background. The most blatant example of this is my advocacy of liberal theology, and the desire to better understand how theology has been influenced by certain social contexts. Perhaps the best way to understand my appreciation for some of the theological perspectives that have been influenced by social elements is to move from an introduction on my research to a chapter on the theology of reconciliation. Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation will introduce the reader to some of the past research on the theology of reconciliation. This chapter will also establish a model of the theology of reconciliation that will be used to analyse the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities.

²⁷ These theological movements will be examined further in Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION

Introduction

It is not often that scholars of theology will admit that a concept within their realm of study is “confusing,”²⁸ having “no agreed upon definition,”²⁹ and has become “trivialised”³⁰ and “sentimentalised.”³¹ While the concept of reconciliation has been researched by renowned theologians such as Karl Barth, debates remain concerning its meaning and practical application. This has caused, according to some scholars, reconciliation to be ignored in theological reference material.³² Schreiter explains that one reason there is such a diverse reaction to the theology of reconciliation is because of the word reconciliation itself. Reconciliation in the social realm, according to Schreiter, is dependent upon the social context in which it is applied. He argues that the complicated nature of the theology of reconciliation comes from scholars who have historically defined the word reconciliation from their own personal contexts.³³ If this view is correct, the only way to understand reconciliation, and likewise the theology of reconciliation, is to trace its historical and cultural developments to the present day.

²⁸ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59.

²⁹ Robert Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 13.

³⁰ Colin Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 167.

³¹ Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” 167.

³² José Comblin discusses the lack of reconciliation in traditional Catholic theological manuals. José Comblin, “The Themes of Reconciliation and Theology in Latin America,” in *Reconciliation, Nations and Churches in Latin America* ed. Ian S. Maclean (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 137.

³³ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 13.

The following chapter will offer a sketch of varying perspectives on the theology of reconciliation. It will begin with a brief history on the use of the word reconciliation in the biblical texts, followed by an outline of the development of the theology of reconciliation from the Early Church Fathers to the present day. This will then lead to a discussion on the theology of reconciliation based on the thoughts of some key scholars who are currently researching the subject. Finally, because the views on this theology vary to such a degree, there will be an introduction to a model of the theology of reconciliation based on the different views on the theology of reconciliation. This model will be used throughout the rest of the study as a baseline view on the theology of reconciliation.

The Biblical Background

Old Testament scholar Carmel McCarthy offers insight into the idea of reconciliation in the Hebrew Bible:

There is in fact no single specific term in Hebrew or Aramaic to express the concept of reconciliation in the Old Testament, even though the underlying reality itself is caught in a variety of shades through terms such as shalom, atonement and renewal of covenant. Through many and varied images one of the connecting threads permeating very different Old Testament narratives, stories, psalms and laments is that the human condition is one of limitation and misunderstanding, alienation and estrangement. Not only is this the situation on the horizontal level in interpersonal relations of every kind, but the Bible makes it very clear that this situation is but symptomatic of a more fundamental disorder and estrangement between human beings and God.³⁴

³⁴ Carmel McCarthy, "A Response," in *Reconciliation in Religion and Society*, ed. Michael Hurley (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1994), 43.

Covenant is used in the Hebrew Bible to explain the relationship between God and the people of Israel. Five major examples of covenant in this text include: Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26-2:3), Noah and his family (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-14; 22:16-18), Moses and the Israelites (Exodus 19:5-6; 3:4-10; 6:7), and David and the Kingdom of Israel (2 Samuel 7:8-19).³⁵ Although the word *reconciliation* is not used explicitly in these instances, McCarthy explains that its attributes are inherently present in covenantal discourses.³⁶ Karl Barth goes as far as to say: “The covenant is the presupposition of reconciliation... The fellowship which originally existed between God and man, which was then disturbed and jeopardised, the purpose of which is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the work of reconciliation.”³⁷ Barth explains that the exact meaning of the word covenant is unknown, but that it could have practical origins such as in circumcision and meal ceremonies:³⁸ “It denotes an element in a legal ritual in which two partners together accept a mutual obligation.”³⁹

De Gruchy makes a similar reflection on the connection between covenant in the Hebrew Bible and the theology of reconciliation. Because humanity was created in the image of God, De Gruchy explains, the whole of humanity shares an intimate link with one another while simultaneously existing under the umbrella of God’s cosmic intention. This link is oftentimes, in the Hebrew text, solidified through the use of covenant. De Gruchy sees the theology of reconciliation as contingent on this understanding of creation because it explains the actual

³⁵ St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology: Steubenville, Ohio, “Covenant: The Master Key that Unlocks the Bible,” <http://www.salvationhistory.com> [accessed 13 May 2008].

³⁶ Some Hebrew words have been translated into the LXX as reconciliation. Examples include: 2 Macc. 1:5, 5:20, 7:33, 8:29.

³⁷ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, trans. G.W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum Books, 2004), 24.

³⁸ Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 25.

³⁹ Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 25.

need, not just the desire, for humanity to be restored both to God and one another when separation has occurred.⁴⁰

Along with the idea of covenant, reconciliation is seen in practical form in the Hebrew text by way of stories concerning “warring brothers.”⁴¹ Sibling rivalry was a prominent theme in the stories of the Hebrew people, and oftentimes these tales would end in death.⁴² There are two instances, however, in which warring brothers were able to reconcile with one another. The first of these stories concerned Jacob and Esau in Genesis 30-33.

The sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau was established at the beginnings of their lives, as they were at war even in the womb. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, Rachel, Jacob and Esau’s mother, complained that her children “struggled together within her.”⁴³ This rivalry continued into adulthood as Jacob grew to be his mother’s favourite. She aided him in deceiving his ailing father (Gen. 27:1-29), causing Esau to lose what was rightfully his. Esau swore that he would kill Jacob because of this betrayal (v. 41). This hatred lasted throughout their lifetimes until the climactic moment when Jacob and Esau met face to face (Gen. 33:1). Jacob humbled himself to his brother, bowing and referring to himself as a “servant” to Esau (v. 3, 5). Esau forgave Jacob with an embrace and a kiss, and their two families were allowed to finally meet (v. 4-7).

A similar story occurs in Genesis 37-50. Joseph was the preferred son of Israel, and his father made this clear through public doting and gifts (Gen. 37:3). The brothers plotted against Joseph, selling him into slavery (v. 27) and making it look like he was eaten by an animal (v. 31-3). Joseph was sent to Egypt and was able, after many years, to work his way from slave to

⁴⁰ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 48.

⁴¹ David Stevens, *The Place Called Reconciliation: Texts to Explore* (Belfast: Corrymeela Press, 2008), 3.

⁴² See Cain and Abel in Genesis 4.

⁴³ Genesis 25:22.

the Pharaoh's advisor (Gen. 39-41:38). At the beginning of his time with the Pharaoh, the land was prosperous and people were able to eat (Gen. 41:47-9), but this was followed by a period of intense famine (v. 50). This famine led to Joseph's brothers petitioning the Pharaoh for food, thereby unknowingly facing their brother (Gen. 42:1-7). Joseph eventually confronted his brothers with his identity, and forgave them for their deception (Gen. 45:4). What followed is similar to the first story; there was embracing and kissing and a reconnection with lost family (v. 13-28). There are common themes between the two stories: rivalry and deception causing initial separation, God being with both the deceived and the deceivers in their trials that followed, an eventual offering of forgiveness by the oppressed, and finally the reconnection of lost family.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for reconciliation-reconcile is present fifteen times, appearing almost completely in the Pauline writings.⁴⁴ The word for reconciliation is the compound ἀφλλάσσω, meaning "to exchange" and deriving from the word ἄλλος, meaning "the other."⁴⁵ Therefore, it is possible to read it together as "an exchange with the other." Biblical scholar Christoph Schwöbel states that classical Greek authors used this phrase as a metaphor for "exchanging enmity, wrath and war with friendship, love and peace."⁴⁶ This particular definition offers some insight into the way the Greeks would have understood the passages in which Paul discusses such an exchange, both with God and between individuals. According to De Gruchy, "Reconciliation literally has to do with the way in which God relates to 'the other,' whether understood as an individual or a group of people. It has to do with the

⁴⁴ This is a contested number, as different scholars have translated this Greek word differently. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 51.

⁴⁵ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 51.

⁴⁶ Christoph Schwöbel, "Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction," in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 16.

process of overcoming alienation through identification and in solidarity with ‘the other,’ thus making peace and restoring relationships.”⁴⁷

This idea of restoration is expanded upon in the only place that reconciliation is spoken of outside of the Pauline letters, the Sermon on the Mount: “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled (διαλλασσομαι) to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”⁴⁸ In his commentary on Matthew, New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz describes how unusual a command such as the one Jesus gave in his sermon would have sounded to a group of Galileans. The concept of traveling for days on end to reconcile before a sacrifice was completely impractical to the average person of that time.⁴⁹ New Testament scholar Margaret Davies writes: “The teaching implies that even offering thanks to God is inappropriate for a person who had wronged another human being, suggesting once more that religion and ethics cannot be separated.”⁵⁰ This is the only time reconciliation is used in the Synoptic Gospels, and it is used from a horizontal perspective, or human to human.⁵¹

The Pauline letters offer greater insight into the way the word reconciliation was used in the New Testament. Biblical scholars such as Ralph M. Martin have gone as far as to say that reconciliation is the overall theme of Paul’s theology.⁵² This claim comes not from the use of the word for reconciliation in Paul’s writings, as it is still used rarely, but from the way it represents the whole of Paul’s missionary work. According to Martin: “Reconciliation provides

⁴⁷ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 51.

⁴⁸ Matt. 5.23-24.

⁴⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 289.

⁵⁰ Margaret Davies, *Matthew* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 53.

⁵¹ To distinguish between the divine and the social within the theology of reconciliation, the phrases vertical (God and humanity) and horizontal (humanity to humanity) will be used.

⁵² Ralph M. Martin “Center of Paul’s Theology,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph M. Martin (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 94.

a suitable umbrella under which the main features of Paul's *kerygma*⁵³ and its practical outworking may be set."⁵⁴ Paul uses the phrase in different forms throughout his texts: the noun καταλλαγή, reconciliation (Rom. 5.11, 11.15; 2 Cor. 5.18, 19); the verb ἀποκαταλασσω, to reconcile (Eph. 2.16; Col. 1.20, 22); καταλασσω (Rom. 5.10; 1 Cor. 7.11; 2 Cor. 5.18, 19, 20); συναλασσω (Acts 7.26); on occasion the word εἰρήνη is translated reconciliation. (Acts 12.20).⁵⁵

Two of the main passages in which Paul uses the word reconciliation are 2 Cor. 5:18-21 and Eph. 2:14-17. The text of 2 Cor. 5:18-21 gives both a horizontal and vertical view of reconciliation. It begins with God, who holds the active role in reconciliation with humanity, and is followed with a statement about God's forgiveness of humanity's sin (v. 18-19). In the verses that follow, the role is reversed and humanity becomes the agent of reconciliation with God as the receiver (v. 20), as S.E. Porter explains: "God is not only the agent or instigator of reconciliation, but is the goal toward whom reconciliation is directed."⁵⁶ The passages confirm the reconciliation of God and humanity as well as the need for those people who are reconciled to be "ambassadors" to those who lack a similar status.

Eph. 2:14-17 deals directly with the conflict between the Jews and the Gentiles. In verse 14 the phrase "for he is our peace"⁵⁷ is proclaimed by Paul. This theme of peaceful existence runs throughout the entire passage, with Christ acting as the agent of reconciliation for the Jews and the Gentiles.⁵⁸ Paul speaks of a new time (v. 13) where Jews and Gentiles are one body, and the wall of division is broken down (v. 14). Therefore, Christ has not only offered salvation, but

⁵³ Greek for preaching.

⁵⁴ Martin "Center of Paul's Theology," 94.

⁵⁵ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 218.

⁵⁶ S.E. Porter, "Peace, Reconciliation," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph M. Martin (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 696.

⁵⁷ Eph. 2:14.

⁵⁸ S.E. Porter, "Peace, Reconciliation," 699.

has also changed the social dynamics of the Jews and Gentiles because of his death. Paul goes as far as to say that Christ abolished the old law (v. 15) and created a new humanity, all for the sake of reconciliation.

Ecclesial Developments

From the biblical scriptures the subject moves to doctrinal developments in the Church. Theologian Jan Milič Lochman observes: “One striking fact is that, despite the centrality of the message of reconciliation in the Bible, the Early Church and its theologians felt no necessity to develop this message into a fully-orbed doctrine.”⁵⁹ Lochman goes on to state that the theology of reconciliation was left in the development stage for much longer than most other Christian beliefs, and it was not until the time of the Early Church Fathers that a doctrine of reconciliation emerged.⁶⁰ It was first discussed by way of the theological concept of atonement, or theories about the connection between Christ’s death and human salvation.⁶¹ Theologian Gustav Aulén based his work *Christus Victor*⁶² on the classification of these atonement doctrines into three major theories: Classic Theory, Latin Theory and Humanist Theory.⁶³

The Classic Theory was established by the Early Church Fathers, and it centres on the vivid imagery and mythology present in much of the New Testament. In this theory, human history is seen as being completely subject to the powers of evil. The world and the cosmos are

⁵⁹ Jan Milič Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation* (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1980), 88-9.

⁶⁰ Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 88-9.

⁶¹ It must be noted that the assumption in this statement is that reconciliation can be used interchangeably with atonement. This is not, however, the case in all understandings of atonement. Some theologians understand God as having “divine perfection,” and thus possessing no need for anything, reconciliation or otherwise. It is an accepted assumption, however, legitimised especially by the work of Karl Barth. Vincent Brümmer, *Atonement, Christology, and the Trinity: Making Sense of Christian Doctrine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 78.

⁶² Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An historical study of the three main types of the idea of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1970).

⁶³ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 81.

at war with good, and humanity is left waiting for the wrath of God. Humanity cannot compete with these evil powers, so God sends Jesus as a representative of and for humanity to do battle against evil. Jesus is seen as a ransom for the lives of those in humanity who are struggling against the Devil on earth.⁶⁴ This idea was developed significantly by Irenaeus (115-202), who asked the question: “For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven?”⁶⁵ The answer to this question, Irenaeus explains, begins with the sin of Adam and the Devil’s continued power over mankind and ends with Christ’s deliverance of humankind from sin and the reclaiming of God’s rightful place as ruler of earth.⁶⁶

Taking the Classic Theory in a different direction, Tertullian (160-220) discussed what he saw as the seemingly illogical idea that humanity should have forgiveness of sins without any type of payment in exchange.⁶⁷ Cyprian (200-258) seized upon this idea and developed the understanding of God’s wrath as satisfied through the “overplus of merit earned by Christ.”⁶⁸ Along with heavenly salvation, this idea of atonement through satisfaction is continued on the earthly stage, wrote Cyprian, in the way of “works of righteousness”⁶⁹ through the Church.

Both Tertullian and Cyprian paved the way for later developments of the Latin Theory, as was seen in the writings of Augustine (324-430) and Gregory the Great (540-604). Augustine understood Jesus’ death as a means of sacrificial substitution for sinful humankind against the

⁶⁴ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 73-4.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II, 14.7, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, The Fathers of the Church Database, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/index.html> [accessed on 10 May 2010].

⁶⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, 18.7, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, The Fathers of the Church Database, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/index.html> [accessed on 10 May 2010].

⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Concerning the Resurrection of the Flesh*, trans. A. Souter (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1922), 20-3.

⁶⁸ Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 95.

⁶⁹ Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatises*, 8.5, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, The Fathers of the Church Database, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/index.html> [accessed on 10 May 2010].

wrath of God.⁷⁰ Gregory specified this substitution by understanding human sin as needing an equal human sacrifice in order for God to forgive.⁷¹

It was through Anselm (1033-1109), however, that the Latin Theory first came together as coherent doctrine. Anselm began his research by examining the idea of sin and its implications on humankind's relationship with God. He saw sin as being a direct dishonouring of God and a betrayal of the creator of humanity, not as a cosmic fight between the Devil and God.⁷² Lochman adds: "Far from being merely a trivial incident, merely a superficial and partial disorder, it is actually rebellion against God himself."⁷³ This rebellion required recompense, for if left unpunished it would create permanent disorder in the world that God had created.⁷⁴ Anselm's answer was a satisfaction for this rebellion that was quantitatively equal to the amount of wrongs committed.⁷⁵

French theologian Peter Abelard (1079-1142) disagreed with both the Classic Theory and the Latin Theory. His understanding of atonement focused not on human rebellion and God's anger, but on the loving nature of God. Humanity is sinful, according to Abelard, but this does not stop God from caring for Creation.⁷⁶ Abelard's emphasis is on true penitence that involves not just empty confessions about wrongdoings, but an actual change in moral

⁷⁰ Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 14.4, trans. Richard Stothert, The Fathers of the Church Database, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/index.html> [accessed on 10 May 2010].

⁷¹ Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, 17.46, trans. unknown, (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), <http://www.lectionarycentral.com-GregoryMoraliaIndex.html> [accessed on 10 May 2010].

⁷² Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. A Clergyman (Oxford and London: John Henry and James Parker, 1858), 11-3.

⁷³ Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 97.

⁷⁴ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 10.

⁷⁵ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 105-9.

⁷⁶ Peter Abelard, *Ethics: Book I*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade (1971; repr., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1995), 37-8.

behaviour.⁷⁷ Christ was sent, therefore, not as a substitution, ransom, or a satisfaction, but as an example of how to live.⁷⁸

With the Reformation came new ideas concerning Christ's death. Martin Luther (1483-1546) picked up on Anselm's ideas concerning satisfaction, but added his own interpretation of the Classic Theory. Like previous advocates of this theory, Luther saw humanity as being unable to break free from sin, and thereby destined to incur the wrath of God. From the Latin Theory, Luther took the idea of Christ as satisfaction to God's anger, but he added that Christ actually became sin itself in order to set humanity free from its power. Despite humanity's complete lack of control in battling sin, Luther emphasised the idea of God's chosen people who were predestined to come to salvation. Therefore, while humanity as a whole was enslaved by sin, not all of humanity would profit from God's grace through Jesus' death.⁷⁹

Likewise, John Calvin (1509-1564) understood Christ to be satisfaction for the curse that humanity had created for itself through sin. In substituting himself, Christ renewed the broken relationship between humanity and God.⁸⁰ Calvin also adhered to the belief that Christ served as an eternal mediator between humanity and God after his resurrection.⁸¹ Perhaps the most distinct contribution that Calvin made to atonement theology was the idea of election. God had pre-determined those who would come to salvation; thus Calvin understood the atonement

⁷⁷ Abelard, *Ethics*, 45-6.

⁷⁸ Peter Abelard, *Between the Philosopher and the Christian*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade (1971; repr., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, Co., 1995), 93.

⁷⁹ Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, 3.13, trans. Theodore Graebner (1535; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1949), 106-135. <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text-wittenberg/luther/gal/web/gal3/10.html> [accessed 10th May 2010].

⁸⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.16.5-7, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, rev. ed. (1536; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 55.

⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 56.

to be for this section of humanity exclusively, those who “with true faith worship God together,”⁸² not for the whole of the humanity.⁸³

The Enlightenment period of history (17th to 18th century)⁸⁴ saw a focus on a rational, human-centred version of reality. Taking the philosophical concepts of the Enlightenment used by Immanuel Kant, René Descartes,⁸⁵ and others, the theologians of the 19th century looked to find a more relational understanding of the atonement.⁸⁶ What resulted was a subjective understanding of the atonement which was labeled Humanist Theory. In Humanist Theory, there is an emphasis on the personal relationship between God and humanity. To those who adhere to this concept, sin is viewed as subjective, and the focus of the Christian faith is the teachings of Jesus on community life and of the intense love that God held for all humankind. According to Aulén, those of the Enlightenment found it “intolerable that God should be thought of as needing to be propitiated through a satisfaction offered to Him.”⁸⁷ According to this humanist point of view, God’s reaction to the death of Jesus was to reward humanity for its repentance through “an increase in happiness.”⁸⁸

Aulén cites one of the most important developers of this human-centred perspective on atonement as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).⁸⁹ In his work *The Christian Faith*,⁹⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher begins by asserting that God’s main desire was to be in fellowship with humanity at any cost. To accomplish this task, God understood the need to be a part of

⁸² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.3, 63.

⁸³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.3, 63.

⁸⁴ These dates are debated by scholars.

⁸⁵ For a further explanation of these philosophers and of the change in thought during the Enlightenment see, Augustus H. Strong, “Recent Tendencies in Theological Thought,” *The American Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (January 1897): 118-36.

⁸⁶ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 150.

⁸⁷ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 134.

⁸⁸ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 135.

⁸⁹ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 135.

⁹⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. J.Y. Campbell, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, English translation of the 2nd ed. (1821; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928).

humanity's earthly fellowship first, hence the incarnation.⁹¹ While on earth, Christ felt sympathy for humanity and its battle against sin. The cross was a way, therefore, for Jesus to find fellowship in the sinful sufferings of humanity.⁹² According to Schleiermacher, the cross is a symbol of God's love for humanity and God's desire to be in fellowship.⁹³ Likewise, the cross serves as a means of understanding God in humanly terms, for it is "an eternally and inexhaustible source, adequate for every further development of a spiritual and blessed life."⁹⁴

It was those who advocated the Humanist Theory perspective that first explored the social realm of the theology of reconciliation. One of the most significant of these theologians was Albert Ritschl (1822-1889), who in 1888 published *Reconciliation and Justification*.⁹⁵ Ritschl's desire was to improve upon the previous theories of atonement by attempting to connect their divisive views.⁹⁶ According to De Gruchy, "[Ritschl's] major contribution was to recast the doctrine in terms of moral values and to see reconciliation as extending the Kingdom or reign of God."⁹⁷ For Ritschl, atonement was more than just being freed from sin; it was a complete transformation into the image of God. Humanity, he states, "come[s] to cherish a different estimate of self, and are changed in disposition."⁹⁸ The aspects of human life that tend to divide, and consequently require satisfaction (debts, grievances), are no longer important because of humanity's complete transformation through Christ's death.

This idea of moral outpouring became a sensation in the United States where, in the late 19th century, the idea of the "Social Gospel" was quickly establishing itself as an intriguing

⁹¹ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 457.

⁹² Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 461.

⁹³ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 458-9.

⁹⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 461.

⁹⁵ Albrecht Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, trans. H.R. Mackintosh and A.B. Macaulay, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902).

⁹⁶ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 67-8.

⁹⁷ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 67.

⁹⁸ Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, 357.

theological development. The pioneer of this movement was theologian Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), who believed that humanity's reconciliation with God made each Christian responsible for the social concerns of God's people.⁹⁹ Rauschenbusch saw an undeniable connection between religion and ethics: "It will be a similar increase of health when theology takes in hand the problems of social redemption and considers how its doctrines connect with the Kingdom of God in actual realization."¹⁰⁰

Ritschl's understanding of the Social Gospel influenced the Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth (1848-1921), who took Ritschl's work and modified it to fit his personal theology. This modification, which Forsyth understood as being vital to theology, focused on the awareness of the danger of extending one's personal moral values to the world in the name of the Kingdom of God. As a result, Forsyth left the teachings of Ritschl and returned to Paul in order to examine the theology of reconciliation in the scriptures. He concluded: "[Reconciliation] meant the total result of Christ's life-work in the fundamental, permanent, final changing of the relation between man and God, altering it from a relation of hostility to one of confidence and peace."¹⁰¹

This return to an emphasis on the theology of reconciliation as it relates to the relationship between God and humanity influenced one of the most important theologians of the modern period, Karl Barth (1886-1968). Barth dedicated an entire section of his *Church Dogmatics*¹⁰² to the doctrine of reconciliation. With God as the ultimate reconciler, the Hebrew idea of covenant created an unbreakable bond between the creation of the world and God,

⁹⁹ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Rauschenbusch Reader*, comp. Benson Y. Landis (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing, 1957), 86-7.

¹⁰⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1945), 17.

¹⁰¹ P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ* (1910; repr., London: Independent Press, 1952), 54.

¹⁰² Karl Barth, *Die Kirchlich Dogmatik I-IV* (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1932-68).

according to Barth.¹⁰³ Jesus, therefore, represented the promise of this covenant by using his status as God and human to serve as a mediator for the sake of the atonement of humanity.¹⁰⁴ The Holy Spirit, in turn, continues the work of God on earth. Those who choose to follow the Holy Spirit are able to participate in transforming the Christian community into the image of God.¹⁰⁵

Building on Barth's work, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) tackled the idea of atonement and community. Perhaps one of the greatest contributions that Bonhoeffer offered to the social arena of theology was the idea of the visibility of the church. According to Bonhoeffer, any church that tried to be invisible in the social and political realms was not a church that followed Christ.¹⁰⁶ Bonhoeffer believed so deeply in the role of the church in the world that he stated, "It is in relation to persons and community that the concept of God is formed."¹⁰⁷

The social developments of the 1950s and 1960s, along with the decisions of the Vatican II council, were major influences on the development of Social Gospel-style Theology.¹⁰⁸ In 1962, the Vatican II council opened¹⁰⁹ with a discussion on two issues of importance: peace and social justice.¹¹⁰ There was a strong urgency in the message of the

¹⁰³ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 69.

¹⁰⁴ Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 95.

¹⁰⁵ Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith, ed. Eberhard Bethge, 6th ed. (London: The Fontana Library, 1965), 297.

¹⁰⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted in Wayne Whitson Floyd, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 49.

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca S. Chopp and Ethna Regan, "Latin American Liberation Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 470.

¹⁰⁹ It should also be noted that this was also the first time that a council had addressed itself to "The Fathers of the Council and all men" as opposed to just members of the Catholic Church. The Vatican Council Fathers, "Opening Message," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 5-6.

Council, as it encouraged Catholic members to have respect for those outside their own community in order to maintain peace: “Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide.”¹¹¹ As Comblin writes, “Though the Second Vatican Council did not create a theology of reconciliation, the term was used various times in ways that were not common in the tradition of the Church.”¹¹² Comblin goes on to explain that for the first time the Catholic Church acknowledged the fact, stated previously by Bonhoeffer, that there must be communication between the Church as a whole and the world. It opened the door for social development within the Catholic Church and it influenced the 1983 Synod of Bishops, whose theme was the dynamics of reconciliation on a vertical and horizontal level.¹¹³

In 1968, a group of Latin American bishops met in Colombia to develop a document that would discuss what the Vatican II decisions meant to their respective countries. Two political and theological themes emerged from the meeting, liberation and reconciliation. Though reconciliation was seen as an important concept to some of the countries that were represented by the bishops, it was reconciliation as it pertained to the idea of liberation that was predominately discussed in the resulting papers of the meeting. These papers were precursors to the later works of theologians who are most commonly credited with developing Liberation Theology. According to theologian Rebecca Chopp, along with the Vatican II and the work of Latin American theologians, there were three other influences in the development of Liberation Theology: political theology, Marxism, and popular religion.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ The Vatican Council Fathers, “Opening Message,” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 5-6.

¹¹¹ The Vatican Council Fathers, “The Church Today,” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 290.

¹¹² Comblin, “The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America,” 137.

¹¹³ Comblin, “The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America,” 137.

¹¹⁴ Chopp, “Latin American Liberation Theology,” 410.

According to Chopp, it was political theologians of this time, such as Jürgen Moltmann (1926) and Johann Baptist Metz (1928), who were developing theological understandings of oppression and liberation.¹¹⁵ Moltmann's influence in particular is undeniable in Liberation Theology, as he helped to create a vision of God that focused on those who were suffering in the world. Accordingly, because of this suffering, Moltmann saw the Christian call to mission as being linked with offering a theology of hope to the world. Hope, according to Moltmann, was created through the death of Jesus, and all Christians were called to share this message to humanity: "The expectation of the promised future of the Kingdom of God which is coming to man and the world to set them right and create life, makes us ready to expend ourselves unrestrainedly and unreservedly in love and in the work of reconciliation of the world with God and his future."¹¹⁶

Marxism and popular religion, according to Chopp, also inspired Liberation Theology. Marx understood the world as being capable of change, but only after the oppressed understood that they were being used by the oppressors.¹¹⁷ Popular religion, as defined by Chopp, "takes seriously the cultural specificity of various Latin American peoples."¹¹⁸ Specifically amongst these "peoples" who were examined were minorities that included blacks, women, and other marginalised groups. The result of the emphasis on popular religion was an interest in the way Christianity operated in non-Western countries and an awareness of the lives of Christians living in oppressed communities.¹¹⁹

While these movements influenced Liberation Theology, it was Gustavo Gutiérrez

¹¹⁵ Chopp, "Latin American Liberation Theology," 411.

¹¹⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 321.

¹¹⁷ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. out of copyright (1848; repr., London: Bookmark Publications, 2003), 14.

¹¹⁸ Chopp, "Latin American Liberation Theology," 411.

¹¹⁹ Chopp, "Latin American Liberation Theology," 411.

(1928) who articulated liberation into a comprehensive theology. Gutiérrez, a Roman Catholic priest from Peru, wrote the seminal text *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*.¹²⁰ In this text, Gutiérrez describes his belief that history was the key developer of theology.¹²¹ His challenge, along with a call for sound biblical understanding, was to use this historically-based view of theology to “be part of the process through which the world is transformed.”¹²² Transformation, as he saw it, should begin with those who are considered, both socially and economically, as the oppressed in society. He believed that the oppressed should work towards a status of liberation against their oppressors in order to free themselves from the burdens of their current situation. Gutiérrez marked a critical point in the history of practical theology because as a theologian he was able to develop a theological concept that not only had social implications, but that centred itself in the social realm: “Social praxis is gradually becoming more of the arena itself in which the Christians work out-along with others-both their destiny as humans and their life of faith in the Lord of history.”¹²³

While understandings of Liberation Theology continued to be developed in Latin America, it was in the 1980s that the focus on reconciliation as it pertained to liberation began to move towards liberation in relation to a broader theme of reconciliation. In 1985, a prominent Liberation theologian José Comblin wrote: “In Latin America, the theme of reconciliation responded and indeed still responds to the problems of the political realities, above all in certain countries such as Chile and Colombia.”¹²⁴ Therefore, it was not surprising that in that same year, at a regular meeting of the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano or Latin American

¹²⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, rev. ed. (1971; repr., London: SCM Press, 2001).

¹²¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 47.

¹²² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 59.

¹²³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 83.

¹²⁴ Comblin, “The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America,” 135.

Episcopal Conference (CELAM), the President of the convention offered a challenge to the theologians attending. This challenge was “to study the theme of reconciliation in theology and society and develop a comprehensive ‘theology of reconciliation.’”¹²⁵ The President of CELAM was inspired, according to Comblin, by a document (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*) sent out after the end of the Roman Synod of 1983.¹²⁶

During the 1980s, theological themes such as liberation and reconciliation became increasingly important to countries suffering from both poverty and internal strife. One such country was South Africa, where Liberation Theology found a popular base amongst those campaigning against the apartheid government. By 1985, South Africa was on the brink of civil war. It was in midst of this trauma that *The Kairos Document*¹²⁷ was produced by a group of theologians and pastors as a means of criticism for the use of reconciliation in South Africa. The document critiqued two different types of theology that the authors believed were associated with the theology of reconciliation and had consequently encouraged apartheid in South Africa: State Theology and Church Theology.¹²⁸ State Theology, they argued, “is the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism.”¹²⁹ The *Kairos* Theologians saw this type of theology as an oppressive tool of the prevailing government. Church Theology, another problematic theological concept, was condemned by the theologians because of its use of popular themes within Christianity to superficially oppose apartheid. These exploited themes, according to the document, were reconciliation, justice, and nonviolence. The problem that The *Kairos* Theologians had with the church theology version of

¹²⁵ Comblin, “The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America,” 135.

¹²⁶ Comblin, “The Theme of Reconciliation in Theology in Latin America,” 135.

¹²⁷ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 7.

¹²⁸ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 17.

¹²⁹ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 17.

reconciliation was the way in which it was used by local churches to publicly show they were attempting to solve problems without ever making any move towards substantive acts of liberation or reconciliation.

Reconciliation was used carelessly in a Christian manner, according to the *Kairos* authors, a manner that implied it was for the benefit of the entire South African community but in reality was nothing more than white, congregational ambivalence. Their main issue with reconciliation, however, was their belief that the battle in South Africa had a good and an evil side, and that reconciling the two was “a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant.”¹³⁰ Reconciliation, according to the authors, was possible only after justice was carried out and repentance clearly displayed by the oppressors. Reconciliation was not, as it had been seen previously in Latin America, connected to Liberation Theology. This influence of Liberation Theology in the South African context is present in the following statement by The *Kairos* Theologians:

As disciples of Jesus we should rather promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissension along the way. To be truly biblical our Church leaders must adopt a theology that millions of Christians have already adopted – a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil rather than a theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.¹³¹

It was the idea that reconciliation was too soft a concept in the South African context that the authors of the document were against, or reconciliation that has selfish motivations and political interests, and that did not address the concept of justice for the oppressed in society.¹³²

¹³⁰ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 26.

¹³¹ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 28.

¹³² The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 25-8.

The Kairos Document split the ideas of reconciliation and liberation into two exclusive theological understandings, where previously the social aspect of the theology of reconciliation had been associated with work in Liberation Theology. Miroslav Volf expressed concern about the split in *The Kairos Document* because it “sets justice and peace at odds with one another. To pursue reconciliation here means to give up the struggle for liberation, to put up with oppression.”¹³³ In keeping with the distinction between reconciliation and liberation, the document also criticised the CELAM conference and its focus on the theology of reconciliation, seeing it as a means to keep oppressors in control by dismissing the importance of liberation. Overall, the document caused controversy among those white Christians of South Africa who saw themselves as being agents of reconciliation. It also caused a stir with black leaders such as Desmond Tutu. Tutu was displeased with the way the document “caricatured and criticised reconciliation.”¹³⁴

Liberation Theology seemed to exemplify the situation in South Africa. It also seemed to be influential in developments of Black Theology and Feminist Theology in the United States. With all of these theological expressions across a variety of contexts, however, there was a common theme: a clear distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed. The result of this distinction was that Liberation Theology did not always fit into the context of places suffering from conflict. Contexts where the understanding of oppressor-oppressed was not so clear found the theological understanding of liberation to be a difficult cross-community sell. It was understood that a different theological concept might better exemplify the situation in these ambiguous scenarios.

¹³³ Miroslav Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” *Interpretation* 2, no. 54 (April 2000): 168.

¹³⁴ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 36.

As the peace process in Northern Ireland began in the 1990s, a number of local scholars and theologians began writing about the idea of reconciliation. This theme of reconciliation became important for the political situation of the 1990s, as there was a desire for unity among those living in the violence-ridden nation. The emphasis on reconciliation was not just in the political realm, though, as some local religious leaders attempted to use their place in the community to help promote non-violence and reconciliation. The result, however, was confusion surrounding the nature of reconciliation. The reason for this confusion was because of the varied understandings of the word; as conflict researchers Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly see it, the literature was never congruent, and “the terminology around reconciliation in Northern Ireland is very fluid, with no clear distinctions made among various concepts at play.”¹³⁵

Attempts to correct this problem resulted in various conferences and scholarly research. Irish theologian Michael Hurley organised a seminar in 1994 on reconciliation, the contributions to which were later collected in *Reconciliation in Religion and Society*.¹³⁶ In 2001, practical theologian Cecelia Clegg and Joseph Liechty published the book *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*,¹³⁷ an examination of their work with communities in Northern Ireland that explained the complicated nature of sectarianism and reconciliation. The Faith and Politics Group published *A Time to Heal: Perspectives on Reconciliation*¹³⁸ in 2002. This booklet offered two decades of insight from clergy and laypeople concerning their thoughts on reconciliation. One of the more recent works of literature on the theology of reconciliation in

¹³⁵ Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, “A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland,” *Democratic Dialogue* 18 (September 2005): 27.

¹³⁶ Michael Hurley, ed., *Reconciliation in Religion and Society* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1994).

¹³⁷ Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001).

¹³⁸ Faith and Politics Group, *A Time to Heal: Perspectives in Reconciliation* (Belfast: Faith and Politics Group, 2002).

Northern Ireland is Corrymeela Community leader David Stevens's *The Land of Unlikeness*.¹³⁹ This book examined theological insights and biblical references for Christians seeking to better understand reconciliation with perspectives from the Northern Ireland context.

There is understandable criticism when it comes to the development of the theology of reconciliation from the Early Church Fathers to current literature. Widely left out of major works of academic reference material, reconciliation is a theme that has been largely ignored on an ecclesial scale. While theological concepts such as Liberation Theology have been acknowledged as legitimate expressions of biblical text, the theology of reconciliation has been kept out of the public sphere until relatively recently. When it was introduced, there were a myriad of misunderstandings, as the theology has oftentimes been accused of being used by oppressors as a means of maintaining positions of power.

Despite this criticism, there are places such as Northern Ireland where the theology of reconciliation has a chance of being used in a practical forum. The first step in creating this praxis, however, is understanding the ambiguity surrounding the conceptual realm of reconciliation. Joseph Liechty sees this basis of understanding as important: "Sometimes confusion [around reconciliation] does distort practice, and both understanding and practice would be enhanced by a better grasp of the whole network of actions and qualities that make up reconciliation."¹⁴⁰ Accordingly, theologians who are currently researching reconciliation have begun to dissect the multi-faceted nature of the theological ideas concerning reconciliation, and are working towards creating a doctrine of reconciliation that does not ignore the social implications of the theology.

¹³⁹ David Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness: Explorations into Reconciliation* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁰ Liechty, "Putting Forgiveness in its Place," 60-1.

The following sections will offer an in depth look at those theologians who are trying to better define the theology of reconciliation. These sections will include aspects of the theology that are most commonly debated: the vertical-horizontal debate, key concepts in the theology of reconciliation, and reconciliation as a process or goal.

Current Theological Perspectives on the Theology of Reconciliation

The “Vertical or Horizontal” Debate

All this is from God, who reconciled us to [Godself] through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to [Godself], not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making [God’s] appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.¹⁴¹

This verse, whilst a cornerstone to the theology of reconciliation, has caused a great deal of debate amongst scholars who question the connections between God and humanity (vertical) reconciliation and humanity and humanity (horizontal) reconciliation. These debates seem to stem from its historical developments. Beginning with discussions on the nature of the atonement, the theology of reconciliation was seen first as a Christological study. Following Vatican II and the popularity of the Social Gospel in the 1960s, the theology was more widely understood as being applicable to the social realm.

Since the social aspects of the theology of reconciliation were not developed until a relatively recent period of theology, there is debate as to whether its applicability to Christian ethics or the work of the Church is a correct theological analysis of the original text. Gregory

¹⁴¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

Baum, a Catholic theologian, addresses this issue in his article “A Theological Afterword,”¹⁴² in which he criticises Catholic theological resources¹⁴³ for not including reconciliation in their works, and asserts that the development of reconciliation occurs more in the local churches than with academics.¹⁴⁴ Miroslav Volf states that Protestant theological resources are equally averse to including reconciliation. Volf cites *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*¹⁴⁵ as an example where reconciliation has been left out. He explains that while some resource material mentions reconciliation, most focuses only on the vertical aspect of the theology.¹⁴⁶ One such example is *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*.¹⁴⁷ Here, the vertical aspects of the theology of reconciliation are listed, but the social aspects are given only a brief word at the end. It reads: “There must be a right order here. First reconciliation of the sinner with God, then reconciliation with man follows.”¹⁴⁸

There are those like Colin Gunton and Jim Webster, both systematic theologians, who confirm the idea that the theology of reconciliation should be discussed primarily as a vertical concept and secondarily as horizontal.¹⁴⁹ The danger with connecting the saving act of Christ with a focus on Christian ethics, according to Webster, is that churches are “less drawn to expansive depiction of the sheer gratuity of God’s act of reconciliation, and more commonly offer lengthy accounts of the acts of the Church, sacramental and moral, often through the idiom

¹⁴² Gregory Baum, “A Theological Afterword,” in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997).

¹⁴³ For example, there is no mention of reconciliation in either Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (1987; repr., New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995) or Judith A. Dwyer, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994).

¹⁴⁴ Baum, “A Theological Afterword,” 184-92.

¹⁴⁵ P.B. Clarke and A. Linzey, ed., *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁴⁶ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 161.

¹⁴⁷ Carl F.H. Henry, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973).

¹⁴⁸ Leon Morris, “Reconciliation,” in *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. Carl F.H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 568.

¹⁴⁹ Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” 169.

of virtues, habits and practices.”¹⁵⁰ Webster states that the view of the theology of reconciliation as having social implications is not theologically sound because of its inclination to see Christ’s reconciling sacrifice as akin to moral behaviours and ethical beliefs.¹⁵¹ According to Webster, relying on this view of reconciliation “corrodes Christ’s transcendence of moral community, the sheer freedom of his presence to the Church, and leads to a fundamentally non-dramatic Christology.”¹⁵² Gunton agrees, stating that the danger of focusing on the theology of reconciliation in the social realm is the eventual separation from the theology’s Christological origins.¹⁵³ Gunton concedes that using the theology of reconciliation in the political world is “perhaps”¹⁵⁴ right, but insists that it should never be primary to the overall message of God’s reconciliation with humanity.¹⁵⁵

Another view on this subject, from the systematic theologian Alan Torrance, offers a horizontal and vertical view of the theology of reconciliation. Torrance adheres to the sociological principle that humanity is influenced by all aspects of life, especially faith convictions, and thereby humans will inevitably use their theological beliefs in the practical world. Torrance states, “To be a Christian is to believe that God exists and has purposefully created the contingent order and those who populate it with a purpose.”¹⁵⁶ This purpose was shown through the life and death of Christ, according to Torrance, and continues on earth through the work of the Spirit.¹⁵⁷ Reconciliation, he writes, is one instance of this “participation

¹⁵⁰ John Webster, “The Ethics of Reconciliation,” in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 110.

¹⁵¹ Webster, “The Ethics of Reconciliation,” 123.

¹⁵² Webster, “The Ethics of Reconciliation,” 124.

¹⁵³ Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” 174.

¹⁵⁴ Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” 174.

¹⁵⁵ Gunton, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation,” 174.

¹⁵⁶ Alan Torrance, *The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm* (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2006), 31.

¹⁵⁷ Torrance, *The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm*, 45.

in the divine life.”¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, Torrance understands the ministry of reconciliation as God’s way of aiding humanity in emulating a type of Kingdom of God¹⁵⁹ on earth.

Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter offers a similar perspective on the theology of reconciliation’s place in the social realm. Schreiter’s initial thoughts on reconciliation confirm the work done by Gunton, Webster, and Torrance: on a vertical and horizontal level, reconciliation is initiated by God alone.¹⁶⁰ The two groups’ positions diverge, however, because Schreiter sees this God-centred approach as extending into the social realm. The social level of reconciliation is best seen, says Schreiter, by way of God’s ability to heal victims whose perpetrators do not repent for their actions. Thus, God works both within Christians who are working towards reconciliation and in the lives of victims who find reconciliation difficult to grasp.¹⁶¹ This work with and in humanity is possible because of the likeness that those created have with the Creator.¹⁶² Schreiter explains: “It is that image by which humanity might mirror divinity, by which humanity comes into communion with divinity that is restored.”¹⁶³ This view, Schreiter admits, has been criticised because of its focus on the influence of God and seeming lack of acknowledgment of the role of humanity in reconciliation. Schreiter dismisses this idea by saying that, despite the initiation of God, the work of reconciliation comes “through human action.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Torrance, *The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm*, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Torrance refers to Paul’s use of the phrase “being true in love” to describe the hope God has for humanity. Through being true in love, a Kingdom of God on earth is established: “God not only delivers human history from its brokenness but redeems, renews, and re-creates it, opening up possibilities that would otherwise be inconceivable.” Torrance, *The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm*, 47.

¹⁶⁰ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 14.

¹⁶¹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 14-5.

¹⁶² Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” Gen. 1:26a.

¹⁶³ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 15.

Perhaps the biggest advocate of increased focus on the social aspects of the theology of reconciliation is Miroslav Volf. Volf dedicates a major article to the importance of the social realm of the theology of reconciliation, stating, “Though reconciliation of human beings to God has primacy, reconciliation between human beings is intrinsic to their reconciliation to God.” Volf cites Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus as an example of this view on reconciliation. Paul, at that time known as Saul, was taking professing Christian men and women from their homes and sending them to jail (Acts 8:3). In the scriptures, Jesus identified himself to Paul and then proceeded to ask why Paul was persecuting him (Acts 9:4-5). Volf therefore concludes that because of Jesus’ incorporation of humanity’s ill treatment as Jesus’ own, persecution against humanity is simultaneously persecution against God. Likewise, it was Paul’s anger towards God and the Christian faith that led to his maltreatment of Christians.¹⁶⁵ This proves to Volf that the theology of reconciliation does not primarily have an individual dimension that has applicable social elements, but that the social realm of reconciliation is inherent to the individual view.¹⁶⁶

Cecelia Clegg agrees with Volf’s perspective on the importance of the social realm in the theology of reconciliation in her article, “Between Embrace and Exclusion.”¹⁶⁷ Clegg writes that the Church has often ignored this element of reconciliation and instead focused on the personal atonement elements of the theology: “Learning to live in reconciliation within a church community and between Christian communities is a means of being congruent with the Gospel preached and a living witness to the reconciling embrace of God in Christ.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 166.

¹⁶⁶ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 163.

¹⁶⁷ Cecelia Clegg, “Between Embrace and Exclusion,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹⁶⁸ Clegg, “Between Embrace and Exclusion,” 132.

The Key Concepts in the Theology of Reconciliation

Truth and mercy have met together; justice and peace have kissed.¹⁶⁹

Oftentimes while trying to better explain the theology of reconciliation, scholars choose to use complex concepts as a means of defining their personal perspectives. Joseph Liechty explains that “whenever reconciliation is addressed, a jumble of terms is likely to emerge, with forgiveness, repentance, apology, justice, truth, peace and of course reconciliation itself being among the most common ingredients to the reconciliation stew.”¹⁷⁰ This jumble, according to Liechty, can be confusing, as its concepts are poorly defined and in most cases are combined in a haphazard fashion. Another element of this word jumble that Liechty criticises is the use of certain words as synonyms for reconciliation, such as peace, non-violence, and justice.¹⁷¹ Despite misgivings concerning the random associations linked with reconciliation, scholars still tend to focus on one or more of these flash words when trying to explain the term. Liechty himself chooses to explain reconciliation through the use of two of his “stew” words: repentance and forgiveness. He argues, “At its most basic, reconciling involves the complementary dynamics of repenting and forgiving.”¹⁷²

Robert Schreiter takes the same approach, emphasising the importance of repentance and forgiveness. Schreiter sees reconciliation as beginning with an initiation from God to the

¹⁶⁹ An English translation of a Spanish translation of Psalm 85:10 in John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 28.

¹⁷⁰ Joseph Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59.

¹⁷¹ This can be seen in the article by Choong Chee Pang, “Peace and Reconciliation,” as Pang uses the phrases “peace” and “reconciliation” interchangeably throughout with no real definition of either word. Choong Chee Pang, “Peace and Reconciliation,” in *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of a Shared Identity*, ed. Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 51-9.

¹⁷² Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 60.

victim. This victim receives healing, not through the repentance of the perpetrator, but from God. It is only after this divine act that the victim then petitions God to forgive the perpetrator. After this act of forgiveness from God, the victim also forgives. These acts of forgiveness inspire the perpetrator to repent, thus the sequence is: reconciliation to forgiveness to repentance.¹⁷³

Along with a focus on forgiveness and repentance, some scholars choose to associate reconciliation closely with justice. John W. De Gruchy holds to the idea that justice is the most important element of the theology of reconciliation. In his article, “The Struggle For Justice and the Ministry of Reconciliation,”¹⁷⁴ De Gruchy discusses the delicate relationship between the pursuit of justice and understandings of reconciliation. Since the publication of *The Kairos Document*, there have been debates about the connection or disconnect between Liberation Theology and the theology of reconciliation. The key element in these debates, according to De Gruchy, is the simultaneous need for reconciliation and justice.¹⁷⁵ He states: “At the heart of my argument is the conviction that reconciliation is about the restoration of justice.”¹⁷⁶

De Gruchy understands that there are those who might find his focus on justice in reconciliation to be a hard view on reconciliation, but believes this to be a case of a misunderstanding of the word itself. He defines the concept of restorative justice as justice that does not involve courtrooms or the legal profession, but instead focuses on the re-establishment of broken relationships.¹⁷⁷ Restorative justice, therefore, is at the very heart of the desire for reconciliation, as it focuses on the healing of past wrongs committed. Part of this commitment

¹⁷³ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 64.

¹⁷⁴ John W. De Gruchy, “The Struggle for Justice and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” (lecture, Partners in Mission Consultation of the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), November, 1987).

¹⁷⁵ De Gruchy uses the word “impasse” to describe the tension that seems to exist between those who are seeking justice and liberation and those who wish for a reconciled society. John W. De Gruchy, “The Struggle for Justice and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” 45.

¹⁷⁶ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 2.

to restorative justice, according to De Gruchy, is the ongoing pursuit of truth. De Gruchy writes that truth acts as a liberator if it is working alongside justice and reconciliation by way of a *metanoia*, “a breaking with an unjust past, and moving towards a new future.”¹⁷⁸ Conversely, truth, when working alongside justice and reconciliation, can condemn the accused through “righteous anger”¹⁷⁹ if ignored.

Along with De Gruchy, theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz believes that justice is vital to understanding reconciliation and adds the notion that reconciliation is actually an element of justice. This idea stems from Isasi-Díaz’s understanding of reconciliation as a “social, political, theological virtue within the parameters of justice.”¹⁸⁰ According to Díaz, if reconciliation is under the category of justice, and if seeking justice means being a part of the greater Christian mission, then seeking reconciliation is also a Christian duty.¹⁸¹

Alternatively, Volf has argued against De Gruchy’s focus on justice within the subject of reconciliation. According to Volf, a focus on only justice will eventually lead to injustice.¹⁸² He states: “If one sets human relations primarily in the larger framework of justice, in any settlement one or both parties will invariably feel that justice was not fully served on their behalf.”¹⁸³ An example of this is a context in which the oppressor and oppressed are not clear, and where one side is not the sole victim of violence. Because if justice requires there to be a right and wrong person or group, one side will inevitably lose out to the other, thus creating

¹⁷⁸ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 164.

¹⁷⁹ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 164.

¹⁸⁰ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “Reconciliation: An Intrinsic Element of Justice,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot: Ashgrove, 2006), 70.

¹⁸¹ Isasi-Díaz, “Reconciliation,” 70.

¹⁸² Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 171.

¹⁸³ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 170.

injustice. That is why justice should, according to Volf, be at work in the greater structure of reconciliation, but should never take over as the primary incentive.¹⁸⁴

Like De Gruchy, Volf addresses the tension that exists between Liberation Theology and the theology of reconciliation by analysing *The Kairos Document*. Volf observes that those who wrote the document appear to have placed justice and peace as opposing concepts within the larger pursuit of reconciliation. “To pursue reconciliation here,” Volf writes, “means to give up the struggle for liberation, to put up with oppression.”¹⁸⁵ Volf instead uses the concept of “embrace” as a viable alternative to a justice-centred view on reconciliation. In Volf’s seminal text, *Exclusion and Embrace*,¹⁸⁶ he defines the word embrace as “the will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity.”¹⁸⁷ This practice guides humanity away from categorising groups or people as “good” or “evil,” which can be a problem in contexts of “conflicts between cultures,”¹⁸⁸ where justice is relative and truth is subjective.¹⁸⁹

Rather than choosing one or two concepts to explain the theology of reconciliation, some scholars have begun to see how they can be used together to better explain the subject. Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, through their work on reconciliation in Northern Ireland, explain that reconciliation has to be “built on the interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice.”¹⁹⁰ Likewise, by using particular concepts that tend to be

¹⁸⁴ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 163.

¹⁸⁵ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 168.

¹⁸⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

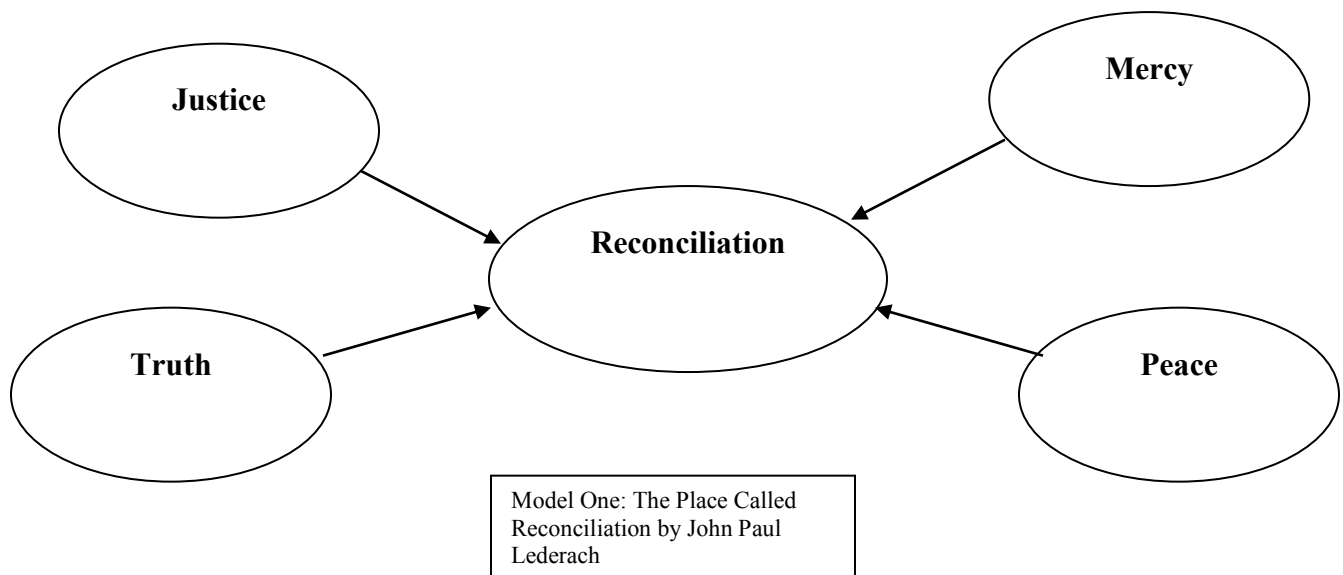
¹⁸⁷ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Volf writes: “When competing accounts either of what is just or what justice means clash, one person’s justice is another person’s barbarity.” Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 195.

¹⁹⁰ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 44.

associated with reconciliation, professor of conflict transformation John Paul Lederach has created a model that shows how certain elements work together in the pursuit of reconciliation. Lederach developed his ideas concerning the theology of reconciliation while teaching a conference on conflict and reconciliation with clergy and lay people in Central America. Lederach chose Psalm 85:10 as a basis for the conference, and he worked with participants to break down the different concepts in the verse for the purpose of discussion. The group analysed the attributes contained in the words *truth*, *mercy*, *justice*, and *peace*. The place where truth, mercy, justice, and peace met, the group decided, was reconciliation.¹⁹¹



Along with this exercise, the participants also tried to better define the words used in the model: *truth* as acknowledgment, transparency, revelation, and clarity; *mercy* as acceptance, forgiveness, support, compassion, and healing; *justice* as equality, right relationships, making things right, restitution; *peace* as harmony, unity, well-being, security, and respect.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ John Paul Lederach, "Missionaries Facing Conflict and Violence: Problems and Prospects," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (January 1992): 13-4.

¹⁹² John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 30.

Various scholars have used this model of reconciliation's key concepts to aid in explaining the subject in their context. David Stevens adapts the work of Lederach slightly by including descriptions of the inherent tensions between justice and peace, peace and truth, truth and mercy, and mercy and justice. Such tensions are undeniable to Stevens because these concepts will inevitably find themselves at odds with one another when placed together. This is why Psalm 85:10 focuses on the fact that these oppositions have come together peacefully.¹⁹³

Along with Stevens, Liechty uses Lederach's model of the web and the dynamics of the justice and truth, but chooses to insert forgiveness and repentance in place of mercy and peace. The model, according to Liechty, finds its strength by way of the criss-crossing strands. No element of reconciliation alone would have as much strength as the collective whole working together. Liechty does concede that reconciliation can take place with one of these strands missing, but that its strength is best when all are working together equally.¹⁹⁴

Reconciliation: Process or Goal?

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.¹⁹⁵

The last remaining debated element centres on the question: If the theology of reconciliation has a social element, and it is composed of varying degrees of concepts such as repentance, forgiveness, justice, and truth, what does it look like in actual practice? Johnston McMaster, a lecturer at the Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast, sees reconciliation as always

¹⁹³ David Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 31-2.

¹⁹⁴ Joseph Liechty, "Putting Forgiveness in its Place," 66-7.

¹⁹⁵ Matt. 5:23-4.

starting with some sort of initiative. These “first moves”¹⁹⁶ are important because they symbolise the desire for people to have better relationships with God and one another. Despite this simplistic answer, McMaster adds: “The practice of reconciliation, though, is complex and is a long-term process.”¹⁹⁷ McMaster questions the idea that reconciliation is a place or a goal, as he sees it primarily as a cyclical process. This circular understanding sees humanity as being in a constant state of relationships breaking down, and likewise needing to be constantly restored. He therefore deems reconciliation as a “continuous process.”¹⁹⁸

David Stevens develops a similar idea by saying that Christians, based on teachings in the scriptures, have always been taught the importance of human relationships. These relationships, because of the elements of the outside world, are always in a state of breaking down and being restored. It is therefore a continuous process for Christians to work towards reconciliation and thereby remain connected to those around them.¹⁹⁹

Schreiter, on the other hand, sees the Christian understanding of reconciliation not as a managed process but as a type of spirituality. He explains that Christian reconciliation is often masked as conflict resolution, but the two are not the same. According to Schreiter, conflict resolution follows a pattern that results in two parties at peace with one another. This pattern first involves two imbalanced groups coming together and secondly requires one of the groups to give up a vested interest for the sake of balance. Schreiter does not see this process as being akin to Christian reconciliation for three reasons: it is not God who is reconciling; mediation processes are seen as a learned skill by which problems are solved, and by nature this learned

¹⁹⁶ Johnston McMaster, “A Reconciling Journey: A Northern Irish Theology of Reconciliation” (presented paper, *Pax Christi* Conference, Manchester, England, February 2001).

¹⁹⁷ McMaster, “A Reconciling Journey,” 2.

¹⁹⁸ McMaster, “A Reconciling Journey,” 3.

¹⁹⁹ Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 21.

skill is innately culturally biased.²⁰⁰ In contrast to this praxis, a distinctively Christian understanding of reconciliation, according to Schreiter, involves “a view of the world that recognises and responds to God’s reconciling action in the world.”²⁰¹ This view begins with God’s reconciling with humanity. It is through this action that humanity is instilled with a desire to live in a reconciled earthly community. Accordingly, reconciliation is not an understanding of conflict resolution, but an inspired lifestyle.²⁰²

To conclude an analysis of current works on the theology of reconciliation is simply to acknowledge that work is still ongoing in the understanding of this complex theological concept. Those who are working towards a better understanding of the theology have, by the very nature of the subject, created more questions to be answered. What have been established through current research are commonly contested themes within the theology of reconciliation. These themes seem to represent the most important aspects of the theology of reconciliation: the vertical and horizontal debate, the elements of reconciliation, and reconciliation as a process or goal. These previously discussed themes will be the focus of the following section, which looks to create a research perspective for use in analysing the Northern Ireland context.

A Perspective on the Theology of Reconciliation

In choosing a baseline perspective on the theology of reconciliation I am aware that I might add confusion to an already over-saturated area. My goal, however, is to attempt to bring together some of the differing views of the theology of reconciliation without creating a relative theological monster in the process. This perspective is necessary because it will serve as the

²⁰⁰ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 26-7.

²⁰¹ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 60.

²⁰² Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 60.

means by which I analyse how the social context's influences the development of a theology of reconciliation. One basic assumption to note is that in doing this, based on my thesis question, I acknowledge that my ideas on the theology of reconciliation might also have been influenced by my own local context.²⁰³

Differing Views on the Theology of Reconciliation

The vertical and horizontal debate concerning the theology of reconciliation is the first area of contention in this discussion. The understanding of the social aspect of the theology of reconciliation as an ethical outpouring, a secondary result of personal salvation as opposed to an inherent aspect of reconciliation with God, has caused debates among theologians. There are those theologians, such as Colin Gunton and Jim Webster, who believe that emphasising a social dimension of the theology of reconciliation will lead to a decreased understanding of the transcendent nature of Christ on earth.

On the other side of the argument are those theologians, such as Miroslav Volf and John W. De Gruchy, who see the horizontal aspect of reconciliation as being an undeniable part of the vertical. These theologians believe there is a danger that reconciliation's social implications will be left to politics while its vertical ideals are exemplified theologically. This has been the case in the history of the church. Or as the Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas states: "For if what is said theologically is but a confirmation of what can be known on other grounds or can be said more clearly in non-theological language, then why bother saying it theologically?"²⁰⁴

²⁰³ See Methodology, Chapter One: Introduction.

²⁰⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (2001 repr., Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 53.

For those on both sides of the debate, the need to place either the vertical or horizontal understanding of reconciliation in a position of primacy seems to be the main point of contention. This is, perhaps, a misunderstanding of the intentions of those advocates of a social dimension of reconciliation by those who prefer a largely vertical understanding. This misunderstanding has likely occurred as a result of a desire by some theologians to explore a subject that has been previously ignored by the theological community. Focusing on previously unexplored elements of reconciliation does not mean that theologians have placed the social aspects above humanity's reconciliation with God, for most advocates of a social dimension would place it in partnership with vertical understandings of reconciliation. Volf, for example, understands the primacy of the reconciliation as being between humanity and God, but also adheres to the idea that "reconciliation between human beings is intrinsic to their reconciliation with God."²⁰⁵ John Howard Yoder holds a similar view: "The Gospel itself, the message that Christ died for his enemies, is our reason for being ultimately responsible for the neighbour's, and especially the enemy's, life."²⁰⁶

There is then a return to the original question: Are social implications of the theology of reconciliation an ethical response to personal restoration with God, or is the horizontal understanding of reconciliation intrinsic to the vertical? Although seemingly similar, the first idea puts the social element of the theology at a lower level than the personal reconciliation with God. In other words, first we are reconciled to God, and as a result we change our relationships in the world. The second understanding sees reconciliation with God-humanity and humanity-humanity as both initiated, though not dictated, by God as one divine hope.

²⁰⁵ Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," 166.

²⁰⁶ John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 42.

Adhering to the intrinsic nature of reconciliation on a vertical and horizontal level does not mean that humanity is a slave to the will of God, for not all of humanity shall choose to be reconciled with God and likewise will not choose to be reconciled with their neighbour. What is offered, to those who will accept it, is an example of an ultimate example of reconciliation through Christ's actions on earth and likewise God's forgiveness. According to Hauerwas: "God's kingship and power consists not in coercion but in God's willingness to forgive and have mercy on us. God wills nothing less than that men and women should love their enemies and forgive one another; thus we are perfect as God is perfect."²⁰⁷ The freedom to choose is still with humanity (this is even if one believes that God is still the initiator in the social scenario, for it is humanity that chooses to act), but it places the whole of creation under a God-initiated mission of reconciliation, and thereby states that the divine hope of humanity's reconciliation with God is also the divine hope of humanity's reconciliation with one another.²⁰⁸

The second area of debate amongst those who study the theology of reconciliation concerns the various concepts used to describe it. The most popular understanding of the concepts at work is the web-like model of John Paul Lederach. Theologians have used this model, and its key concepts of mercy, peace, truth, and justice, and adjusted it based on their own understandings. Joseph Liechty and David Stevens have both changed the model slightly to include forgiveness and repentance as opposed to mercy and peace. Stevens, in turn, discusses the inherent tension that exists between these four concepts, truth, justice, forgiveness and repentance. His analysis shows that truth and justice are oftentimes at odds with repentance and forgiveness. Truth, especially in scenarios of extreme violence, makes forgiveness difficult. The

²⁰⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, "Jesus and the Social Embodiment of the Peaceable Kingdom," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (2001 repr., Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 131.

²⁰⁸ Volf holds a similar view, using the example of Paul on the road to Damascus, and stating that from the beginning, "Enmity towards God was enmity towards human beings, and enmity towards human being was enmity towards God." Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," 165.

fear of justice in its punitive form can make repentance tricky, and likewise can ignore the importance of forgiveness.²⁰⁹

The tension between these two divisions of concepts, repentance and forgiveness versus truth and justice, is their desired goal. De Gruchy, for example, defines reconciliation with an emphasis on truth and justice. He states that reconciliation is “a process in which we become engaged at the heart of the struggle for justice and peace in the world.”²¹⁰ On the other hand there are the elements of forgiveness and repentance, which Joseph Liechty uses in his definition of reconciliation: “At its most basic, reconciling involves the complementary dynamics of repenting and forgiving.”²¹¹

There is a distinction amongst those theologians whose emphasis on the theology of reconciliation is truth and justice and those who define it as forgiveness and repentance. As Stevens explains, on one side justice and truth work together as “forms of acknowledgment and accountability.”²¹² On the other side stand forgiveness and repentance, which Stevens describes as having “collective and communal aspect[s].”²¹³ One group seeks freedom for oppressed and oppressor, the other seeks peace by bringing the oppressed and the oppressor together. We have, therefore, two different understandings of the theology of reconciliation existing as one. In one understanding the focus is liberating tendencies (truth and justice) with a goal of freedom and in the other a reconciling view (forgiveness and repentance) with a goal of peace. It is important to note here that some theologians might argue that the goal of liberating tendencies might be equality and that of reconciling tendencies might be unity. I would argue that these are long-

²⁰⁹ Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 29-30.

²¹⁰ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 21.

²¹¹ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 60.

²¹² Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 30.

²¹³ Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 29.

term understandings that must grow from an initial atmosphere of both freedom and peace respectively.

If we again return to the differing stances of Miroslav Volf and John W. De Gruchy, we see that De Gruchy understands the idea of “a restoration of justice”²¹⁴ to be the key to a theology of reconciliation, thus leaning towards liberating tendencies. Volf holds to the idea that reconciling tendencies should stand as the most important aspect of a theology of reconciliation. He likewise argues against De Gruchy’s emphasis on justice, stating, “If you struggle for justice and nothing but justice, you will inevitably get injustice.”²¹⁵ Volf, while acknowledging the importance of justice, contends that it must be placed under the overarching theme of reconciliation. De Gruchy counters this: “The paradox is that the single-minded pursuit of justice can lead to destructive vengeance, just as the pursuit of reconciliation without justice perpetuates evil.”²¹⁶ Reconciliation, as De Gruchy sees it, should, like justice, be considered dangerous if left without some sort of accountability. This accountability, says De Gruchy, is justice.

The problem, again, is that there is a need to place a certain concept of reconciliation as primary; in this case, justice or forgiveness, truth or repentance. This desire for one above the other could be due to the either-or nature of the concepts themselves. If we return to Lederach’s model, it appears that one reasoning for this contention might be that the model itself is static, and does not reflect any change if moved from one social context to the next. This has created a highly theoretical and less practical model of the theology of reconciliation. According to

²¹⁴ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 2.

²¹⁵ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 171.

²¹⁶ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 169.

Robert Schreiter: “It is important to recall that there is no formula or strategy for reconciliation that will be applicable in every instance.”²¹⁷

Practical application of these ideal concepts is relative, for most of humanity would agree that there is no idea of perfect justice, or accurate truth. It is likewise impossible to have the concepts of truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness existing in perfect balance, even while pursuing reconciliation. It is on this idea of the relativity of the main concepts of the theology of reconciliation that both Volf and De Gruchy do agree. Volf explains the use of the concept of truth: “[First] the belief in an all-knowing God should inspire the search for truth; the awareness of our human limitations should make us modest about the claims that we have found it... We ‘know in part,’ second, because our limited knowledge is shaped by the interests we pursue filtered through the cultures and traditions we inhabit.”²¹⁸ De Gruchy, also discussing truth explains: “Given our human limitations, not least the partiality of our perspectives shaped by local location, past experience, loyalties, values and interests, as well as the nature of truth itself, we can never arrive at or grasp the whole truth.”²¹⁹ Both theologians agree that the meaning of the main concepts found within the theology of reconciliation is relative to particularities of a social context. Therefore, the overall result of the contextual nature of the ideas of truth, justice, forgiveness, and repentance place the idea of the theology of reconciliation on a sliding scale, which moves between the poles of liberating tendencies (truth and justice) and reconciling tendencies (forgiveness and repentance). Returning to the examples of Volf and De Gruchy, Volf places De Gruchy’s understandings of reconciliation in the

²¹⁷ Robert Schreiter, “Establishing a Shared Identity: The Role of the Healing of Memories and of Narrative,” in *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of a Shared Identity*, ed. Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 7.

²¹⁸ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 243.

²¹⁹ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 155.

context of the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.²²⁰ De Gruchy discusses Volf in a like manner, stating that his desire for people to put the past behind them comes “with his native Croatia in mind.”²²¹

These two groups of concepts, justice-truth and forgiveness-repentance, despite having different goals are undeniably linked under the arch of the theology of reconciliation. It seems, based on past research in the area that theologians would insist that all four elements must be present in some form for reconciliation to occur.²²² For example, Stanley Hauerwas argues: “The issue is not whether there is a connection between salvation and social justice, but whether liberation is a sufficient image or metaphor to depict adequately the nature of that social salvation...Part of our task, therefore, is to find other images as compelling as liberation to depict the salvation we believe accomplished in Christ.”²²³ Likewise, Liechty advocates an understanding of the basic concepts of liberating tendencies and reconciling tendencies as being inter-connected: “In practice, repenting and forgiving need justice-seeking and truth-seeking to keep them honest.”²²⁴ In both these instances there is an understanding that neither liberating nor reconciling tendencies are capable of expressing completely the theology of reconciliation, either from a vertical or horizontal perspective. This is not an uncommon idea. For example, the theologian J. Deotis Roberts states: “Liberation and reconciliation are the two main poles of Black Theology. They are not antithetical-one moves naturally from one to the other in light of the Christian understanding of God and humanity.”²²⁵

²²⁰ Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” 170.

²²¹ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 178.

²²² These theologians include, but are not limited to, Joseph Liechty, John W. De Gruchy, David Stevens, and Cecelia Clegg.

²²³ Stanley Hauerwas, “Some Theological Reflections on Guterrez’s Use of ‘Liberation’ as a Theological Concept,” in *Modern Theology* 3.1 (1986): 71.

²²⁴ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 66.

²²⁵ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 8.

If one looks to the life of Jesus, on a horizontal and vertical level Christ is seen as both a liberator through his actions for the poor and oppressed and a reconciler because of the sacrificial giving of his own life, but always with a hope for humanity to become reconciled to God. From a biblical perspective this can best be seen with two examples from the scriptures: the cleansing of the temple and Christ's words of forgiveness towards the soldiers whilst on the cross.²²⁶ On a vertical level, Jan Lochman contends that it is impossible to understand the life and death of Jesus through one theological understanding, albeit it liberating or reconciling, because of the "multi-dimensional" nature of God's reconciliation with humanity.²²⁷ Salvation, Lochman explains, is a combination of both a reconciling and liberating God.²²⁸

If we, therefore, make the assumption that based on the debates within the theology of reconciliation that: the horizontal element is intrinsic to the vertical element of reconciliation, that truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness are the main concepts within the theology of reconciliation, that these main concepts are oftentimes grouped into liberating and reconciling tendencies, and that neither alone is fully capable of describing the theology of reconciliation, we can then move to see what all of these ideas look like in practice.

A Model for the Theology of Reconciliation

Based on previous research on the theology of reconciliation, I have created a model that will take into account the influence of the social context on theological understandings of reconciliation. This model uses the four most commonly used concepts within the theology of reconciliation: truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness. Because of the interconnected nature

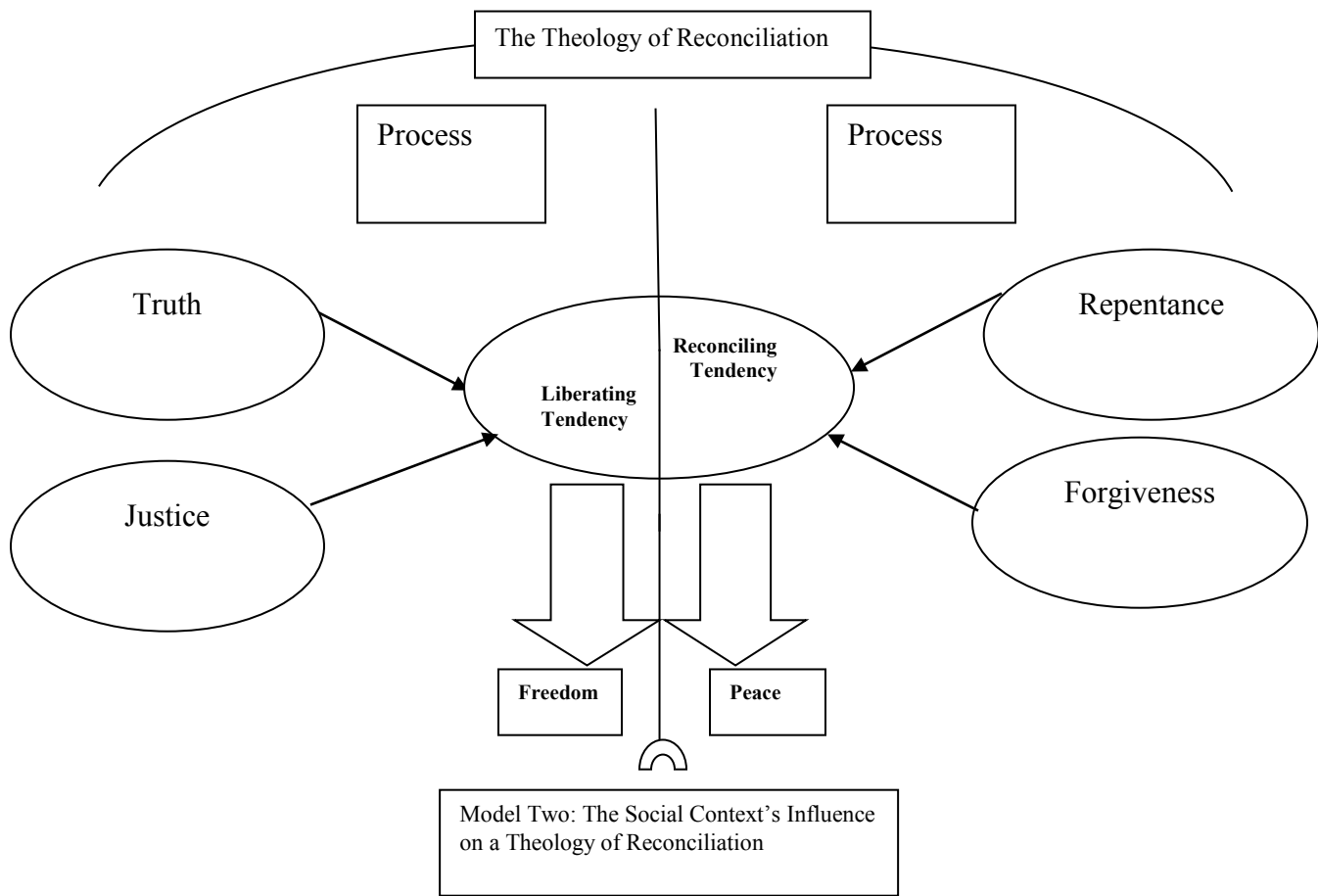
²²⁶ John 2:13-16 and Luke 23:34.

²²⁷ Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 75.

²²⁸ Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 75.

of the four concepts they are oftentimes paired together by scholars. Therefore, within the model, these concepts are divided into two tendencies: truth and justice (liberating) and repentance and forgiveness (reconciling).

Liberating and reconciling tendencies, as such, are both shown to exist under the overarching theology of reconciliation. The movement within the theology of reconciliation when it is influenced by the social context is seen in a modified version of Lederach's model that takes into account a sliding scale model of the swing from an emphasis on liberating tendencies, truth and justice with a goal of freedom, and reconciling tendencies, repentance and forgiveness with a goal of peace. An emphasis on one tendency, liberating or reconciling, in any given context is based on the overall goal of those who are adhering to the theology. For example, the goal of liberating tendencies is freedom; therefore there is a move towards this tendency when freedom is of the utmost importance in a given context. For reconciling tendencies, the goal is peace, and thus one sees a movement towards repentance and forgiveness when peace is a desired reality. The model also takes into consideration the process by which one can interpret either reconciling or liberating tendencies within a theology of reconciliation by way of a descriptive box located above either side on the model.

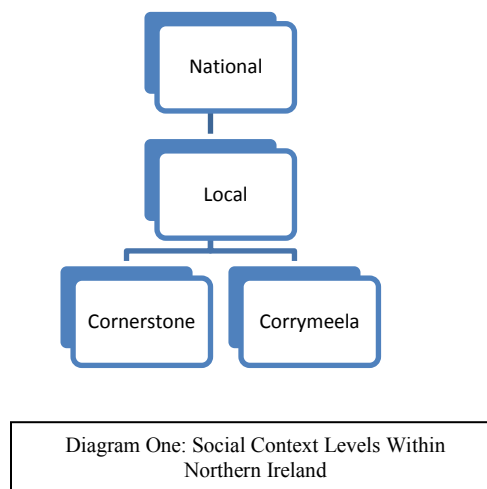


Because of the complex nature of truth, justice, forgiveness, and repentance, it is oftentimes true that, based on the context, the sliding scale moves from left to right. Gustavo Gutiérrez holds a similar view: “If theology is the understanding of an existential stance, it is progressive, it is the understanding of a commitment in history concerning Christians’ location in the development of humanity and the living out of faith.”²²⁹ To better understand the motivations of the movement within the model, it is necessary to offer a basic understanding of the social context.

²²⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Toward a Theology of Liberation,” in *Gustavo Gutiérrez Essential Writings*, ed. James B. Nickoloff (London: SCM Press, 1996), 24.

The Social Context

In the case of this research project, which is centred on understanding the social context, it becomes necessary to unpack what social context actually means. The layered diagram below offers a simple understanding of social context.²³⁰ To give the diagram more depth I have used the example of Northern Ireland and reconciliation communities therein as examples in this diagram:



There is an understanding that this is not a hierarchical diagram, but more as a layered representation of the social context in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the national level includes members of the local level; the local level likewise includes Cornerstone and Corrymeela. The national level represents those in high leadership and organisations that are in positions that are visible to the majority of the population. The local level includes the local population and those organisations that work directly with and in these local areas. This diagram also shows the influence of the national level on the lower levels. According to Lederach, the national level, though few in number compared to the local level, has the capacity to create a trickle-down

²³⁰ This is modeled after the “Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding,” diagram in Lederach, *Building Peace*, 39.

effect that influences the local level: “In essence is it believed that the accomplishments at the highest level will translate to, and move down through, the rest of the population.”²³¹

The two levels, national and local, also have different approaches to conflict and war. Those who operate on the national level, according to Lederach, are concerned more often with, “negotiated settlement between the principal high-level leaders in the conflict.”²³² The national level is geared towards publicly portraying an unbiased opinion amongst divided groups whilst simultaneously maintaining political allegiance with respective political parties. Those at the national level understand the need for an end to conflict on a political level, though they are seen by those at the local level as more removed from the actual issues at hand.²³³ “The peacebuilding approach at this level is often focused on achieving a cease-fire or a cessation of hostilities as a first step that will lead to subsequent steps involving broader political and substantive negotiations,”²³⁴ according to Lederach.

Those on the local level are geared more towards day-to-day activities, and when a country is at war this often means sustaining life at a basic level. The local level, unlike the national, deal daily with whatever conflict is at hand and they are the ones who likewise work towards local relief. Those at the local level, because of their day-to-day adversities, often find it hard to see past their local problems towards any type of greater political resolution.²³⁵ Participants on the local level do have the ability, because of their numbers, to influence one another though it is seemingly less effective than the influence of those at the national level.²³⁶

²³¹ It should be noted that Lederach does describe a “bottom-up approach” but states that this has only been common in recent conflicts. Lederach, *Building Peace*, 45, 52.

²³² Lederach, *Building Peace*, 44.

²³³ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 40.

²³⁴ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 44.

²³⁵ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 52.

²³⁶ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 51-2.

The social context, made up of the national and local level, influence the theology of reconciliation in a given context. The social context also has a historical element, whereby in order to fully understand a current social context it is necessary to also see the historical background that led to the current state of the national and local. This occurs because, theologically speaking, God has revealed Godself to humanity in a particular context and time. This influence of the social context is evident in the expressions of the theology of reconciliation, especially during times of conflict. The following section offers examples of the movement between reconciling and liberating tendencies in a variety of historical and geographical contexts.

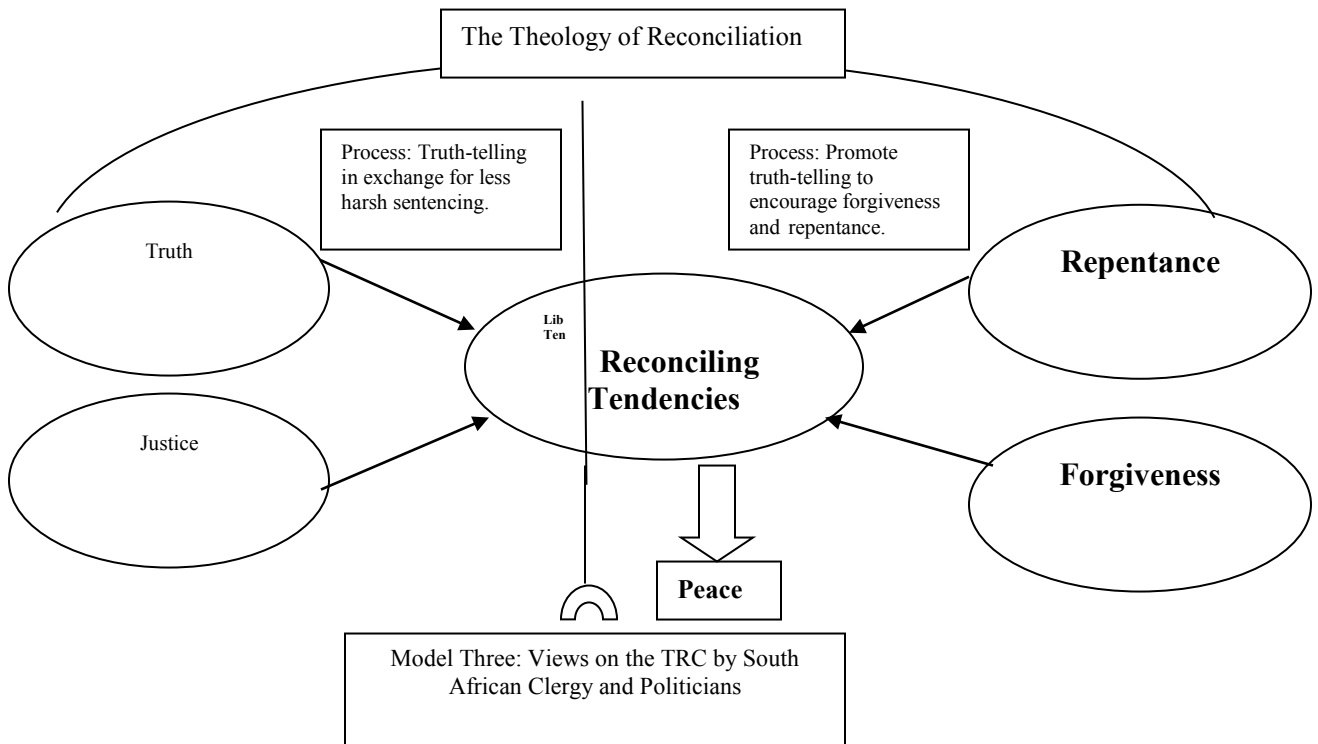
Contextual Models of the Theology of Reconciliation

While understanding reconciliation as strongest when all four concepts (justice, truth, forgiveness and repentance) are equal, Liechty admits that there are occasions when some are more present in a certain social context than others.²³⁷ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, according to Liechty, is one such example, for it lacked an emphasis on the concepts of justice and repentance. To further examine this example of the South African context, one needs to look at the social context behind the theological analysis. The “when” and “where” would be a post-apartheid South Africa. The “what” would be the initial creation of the TRC, set up in order to acknowledge crimes committed during the apartheid era and facilitate truth and reconciliation.²³⁸ The “who” would be, in order to maintain

²³⁷ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 60.

²³⁸ Truth and reconciliation were the two main points emphasised in the creation of the TRC, based on the recorded documentation of the creation of the TRC Commission. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Alex Boraine, Ms. Mary Burton, Rev. Bongani Finca, Ms. Sisi Khampepe, Mr. Richard Lyster, Mr. Wynand Malan, Dr. Khoza

the theological aspect of this discussion, the clergy who aided in creating the TRC, perhaps most famously Desmond Tutu. As for the “why,” De Gruchy explains, “[The TRC was] established to seek the truth about the past in order to facilitate national reconciliation.”²³⁹



By examining only the initial idea and not the debatable outcomes of the TRC, it appears the focus for those setting up the commission were the concepts of truth and reconciling tendencies (forgiveness and repentance). The justice element of Liberation Theology was downplayed while the ideas of truth were made prominent. In a practical way, one can glean what was of primary importance to those setting up the TRC: peace. This is not altogether incomprehensible for political leaders, as they would rather have a nation at peace than personal freedom for their own political sake, but when it comes to religious leaders who adhere to the theological

Mgojo, Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr. Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr. Wendy Orr, Adv. Denzil Potgieter, Dr. Fazel Randera, Ms. Yasmin Sooka, Ms. Glenda Wildschut, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1 (repr. 1998, London: MacMillan Reference Limited, 1999), 18.

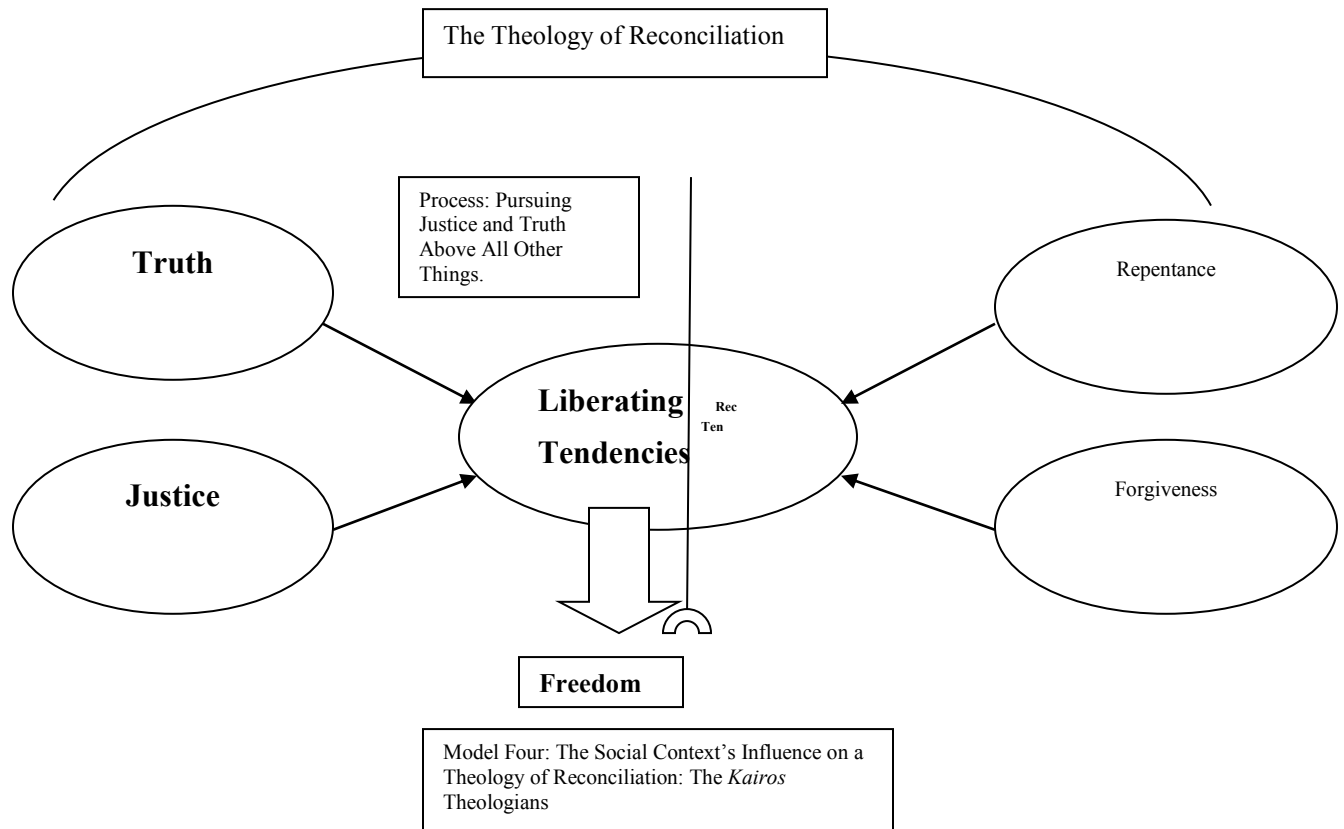
²³⁹ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 10.

background of these concepts associated with reconciliation it becomes a different case. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was much discontent among clergy over the TRC and its outcomes, specifically in the area of justice.

If one examines The *Kairos* Theologians and their views on the theology of reconciliation, the model would look much different. Their desire to “promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissension along the way,”²⁴⁰ would move the scale away from repentance and forgiveness with the goal of peace towards truth and justice. So while both understandings of reconciliation were created in the same “where,” South Africa, the other contextual elements have changed the overall outcome of their understanding of the theology of reconciliation. And while some might debate whether The *Kairos* Theologians’ theology should be placed under the umbrella of a theology of reconciliation, they themselves assured the public that reconciliation was indeed their hope for South Africa, just not a reconciliation that excluded justice.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 28.

²⁴¹ The *Kairos* Theologians, *The Kairos Document*, 9.



To use this sliding scale model in other examples, one might look at religious leaders and groups in Latin America and the United States. Latin America in the 1960s, where Liberation Theology was first established, is the prime example of liberating tendencies as opposed to reconciling.²⁴² Another example of liberation-focused context is the Christian, African-American population involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. During this time period, major decisions were made not in political buildings but in the church. According to the civil rights leader Samuel Kyles: “We all find the Civil Rights Movement as a political movement, but really it was a religious movement. The church has been the solid rock that we’ve had. Our meetings were in churches and that’s why they burned them, that is why

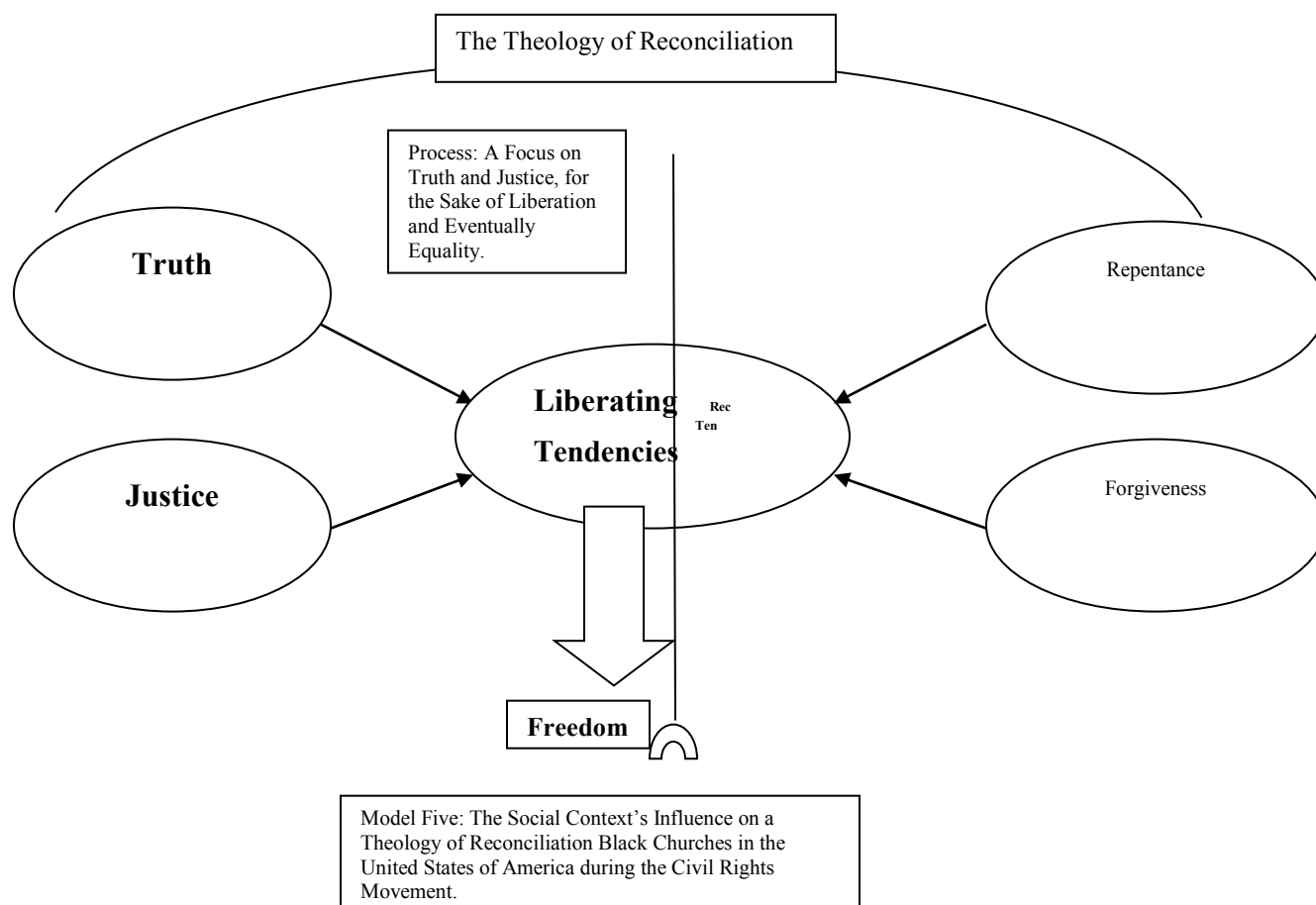
²⁴² The positive attributes associated with peace or freedom should not be seen as being unconditional. There is an assumption that both goals can be used in negative form in order to maintain a harmful status quo.

they bombed them because they were so effective.”²⁴³ It was in the church that the liberating spirituality of the African-American population was nurtured, according to Gwen Harmon, Director of Government and Community Affairs in Memphis, Tennessee: “We went to church to organise. We knew that because we were so strong religiously and spiritually we could affect change politically. We had to have that spiritual belief to gain that kind of strength and that kind of courage to face segregation and to face racism. To say, we are going to vote and our vote is going to count.”²⁴⁴

Those clergy and church members involved in the Civil Rights Movement strongly adhered to liberating tendencies, where truth and justice were the most important processes and freedom and equality the highest ideal. The model for this context would look different than that of South Africa in that there would be much less emphasis on reconciling tendencies than on liberating.

²⁴³ Samuel Kyles interview in “Rich Hall’s The Dirty South,” BBC 4, 14 July 2010 [originally aired 12 July 2010].

²⁴⁴ Gwen Harmon interview in “Rich Hall’s The Dirty South,” BBC 4, 14 July 2010 [originally aired 12 July 2010].



American civil rights activists desired freedom at any cost, even that of a peaceful nation, as the civil rights movement caused a societal stir that was particularly turbulent in the social structure of the southern areas of the United States.

One final example looks to the The National Council of Churches in Korea, an organisation located in South Korea. The Council expressed repentance over its bias against its separated neighbours to the North in a “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace”²⁴⁵ in the late 1980s. In this declaration, The National Council of Churches of Korea expressed their desire for reconciliation in the practical form of reunification through open dialogue between the two countries. The Declaration does not, however, focus on

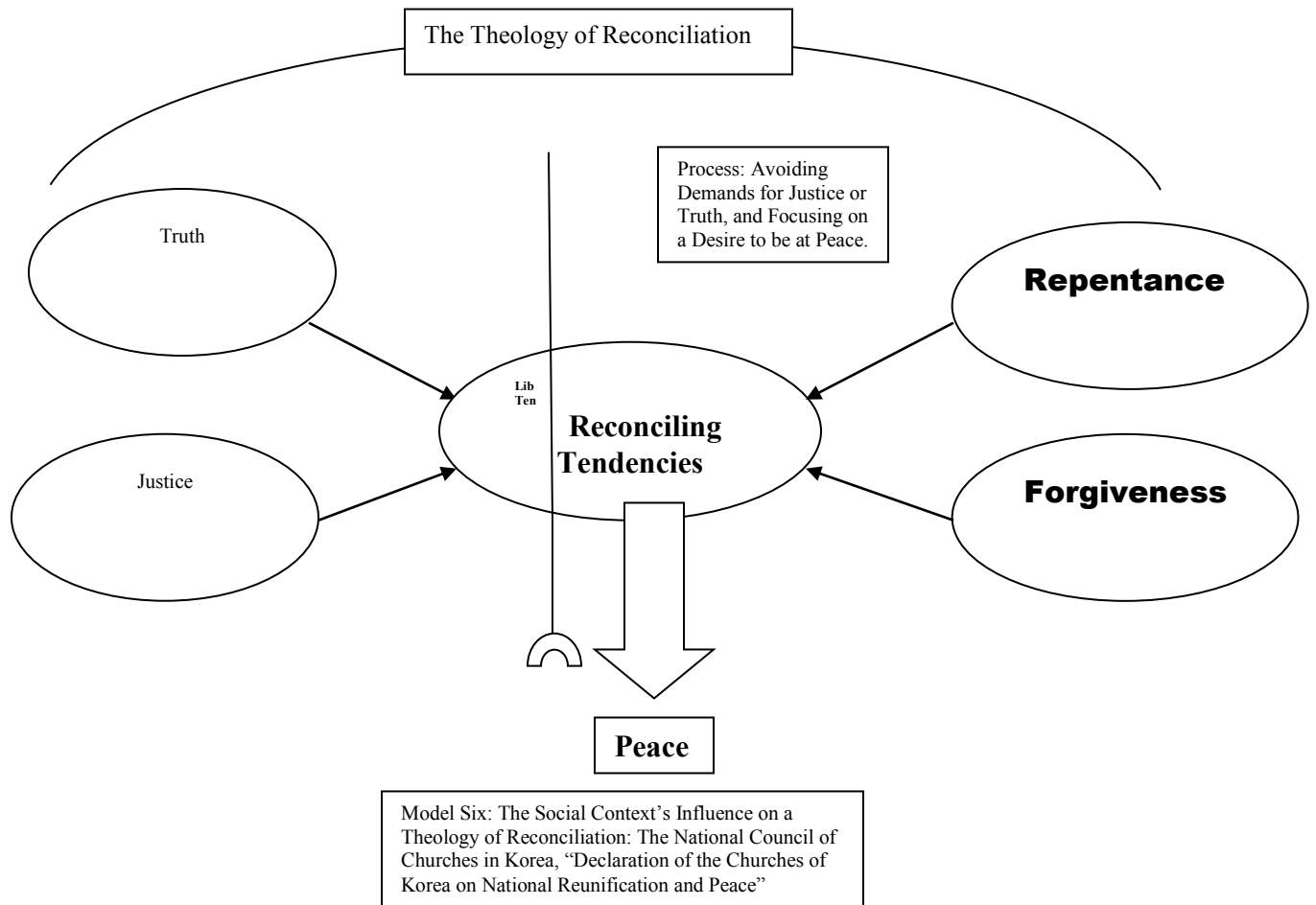
²⁴⁵ The National Council of Churches in Korea, “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace: 29 February 1988,” in *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity*, ed. Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai, and Greg Hoyland (Aldershot: Ashgate), 185-95.

justice, admitting that in order for reconciliation to occur there must be an “end to all mutual hostility and aggressive inclinations, and [North and South Korea] must eliminate exclusionism which leads to the slandering and vilification of one another.”²⁴⁶ Accordingly, there is an overwhelming emphasis on the Christian responsibility of peace in the document, which declares the churches of Korea, because of their Christian belief, to “work as apostles of peace,”²⁴⁷ and to “overcome today’s reality of confrontation between our divided people.”²⁴⁸ Justice is mentioned in the Declaration, but only through a historical reference to the previous Japanese occupation of Korea, and not in reference to the North. Likewise, the document declares that both the North and South have committed crimes against one another, in turn vilifying the other, and thus turning negative propaganda into truth. The model for The National Council of Churches in Korea would have a theology of reconciliation that focused on reconciling tendencies.

²⁴⁶ The National Council of Churches in Korea, “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace,” 185.

²⁴⁷ The National Council of Churches in Korea, “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace,” 185.

²⁴⁸ The National Council of Churches in Korea, “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace,” 185.



Both justice and truth are de-emphasised by the National Council of Churches of Korea, as justice is spoken of only in past historical instances as a means of finding a shared identity with the North. There is little discussion concerning past crimes between the two areas, only an admission that both sides have committed violations of human rights against each other. Therefore, this declaration, under the theology of reconciliation, works towards the goal of peace for the two nations through reconciling tendencies, and avoids discussions concerning liberating tendencies for the goal of freedom.

Conclusion

What I am proposing is that the horizontal element of the theology of reconciliation is an intrinsic aspect of the vertical understanding. This idea places both understandings of the theology of reconciliation as God-initiated hopes for humanity. Visually, I am offering a model of both the liberating and reconciling tendencies that exist within the theology of reconciliation. By way of a sliding scale interpretation I am showing how the social context, based on a national and local level understanding, influence the theology of reconciliation. While understanding the idea attributed to Joseph Liechty, that the elements of justice and truth, repentance and forgiveness would work most effectively if they were in equal proportions, my argument states that this is not a practical possibility and that contextual nuances mean that different tendencies within the theology of reconciliation will be focused on in any given context.

One might argue that this interpretation of the theology of reconciliation as imbalanced in any given context might look like oppression or forced peace. This is where the process aspect of the model comes strongly into play, for it offers the motivations of those who have interpreted the theology of reconciliation through reconciling or liberating tendencies. The connecting factor between the motivations of those who adhere to a dual understanding of the theology of reconciliation is that their overall goal would be to have balance between both reconciling and liberating tendencies, even if it is not possible in their current contextual state. Reader in Religious and Theological Education L. Philip Barnes explains: “Christians are required to practice righteousness and to work for righteousness in the world, even if their practice and their efforts will always fall short of perfect realisation... We live in a fractured

world where justice, peace and reconciliation will not be completely realised until Christ returns and the Kingdom of God is fully established.”²⁴⁹ So while the ideal understanding of a theology of reconciliation is equality and balance, the reality is imbalance. This imbalance likewise changes the overall view of the theology of reconciliation in any given context.²⁵⁰

In the first example of the theology of reconciliation model, the post-TRC reality in South Africa, those who were recording the proceedings admitted that the reconciliation that was occurring was “a form of reconciliation without apologies by those responsible or forgiveness by victims.”²⁵¹ In addition, the *Kairos* Theologians expressed their view that during the course of the TRC, justice was also not represented. The remaining concept, therefore, is truth, which most would agree was present in some form during the proceedings.

Secondly, in the case study of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, clergy could have called their congregations to repent and forgive as well as strive for truth and justice. The result, however, might have been continued oppression by the local government. This does not mean that reconciliation was not the overall goal for the African-American church in the United States, but to aim for peace before freedom could have caused a loss of both.

Finally, in the example of The National Council of Churches in Korea, the South Korean church believed it was necessary in their declaration to largely omit discussions on justice and truth. The document instead focused largely on the Council’s personal repentance and the hope

²⁴⁹ L. Philip Barnes, “Reconciling Enemies: Righteousness and Peace in Northern Ireland,” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, vol. 24, no. 2 (May 2011): 191.

²⁵⁰ Despite these examples, this contextual idea of the theology of reconciliation is not limited strictly to the national and the local, as such, for this is an admittedly simplistic version of the social context. Therefore, extensive study into a particular context, and its layers, is required before a comprehensive understanding of the theology of reconciliation can be discussed.

²⁵¹ Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Alex Boraine, Ms. Mary Burton, Rev. Bongani Finca, Ms. Sisi Khampepe, Mr. Richard Lyster, Mr. Wynand Malan, Dr. Khoza Mgojo, Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr. Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr. Wendy Orr, Adv. Denzil Potgieter, Dr. Fazel Randera, Ms. Yasmin Sooka, Ms. Glenda Wildschut, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 5 (repr. 1998, London: MacMillan Reference Limited, 1999), 400.

of forgiveness from North Korea. To spur on discussions of reconciliation, which in this context meant the hope of reunification, any accusations of guilt or demands for justice were placed to the side. The understanding from The National Council of Churches in Korea was that both sides had committed atrocities towards each other, and thus any type of pursuit of justice against the other country would result in a lack of reconciliation and an overall lack of peace.²⁵²

This model of the theology of reconciliation, as influenced by the social context, addresses the third area of contention amongst scholars concerning the idea of reconciliation as a process or goal. From the perspective that I am offering, I state that the theology of reconciliation is both a contextual process and a hopeful divine goal. The process is expressed through the sliding scale adjustments that work to create the goals of freedom and peace. The two goals that are mentioned in the model, freedom and peace, are a reflection of the overall understanding of Christian reconciliation. These two goals work under the overall theme of the theology of reconciliation, which is defined, according to Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, as “bring[ing] all the elements of the cosmos into positive and life-giving relationships with God and with one another.”²⁵³

The practical question that might be asked at this stage is: If people are using the theology of reconciliation from a contextual perspective, how is it possible for it to be applied to a group of people, let alone a whole nation? This returns to the idea of God’s theological hope for humanity. The hope is that though people might not be able to escape their contextual location, they might be able to use this understanding of the context to aid them in creating

²⁵² It is important to note here that the ideas of peace, freedom, truth, justice, repentance, and forgiveness are not strictly positive concepts, and can be manipulated to represent something beyond their standard understanding. What might appear manipulated to one party might be defended by another as legitimate. For example, the *Kairos* Theologians’ declaration that reconciliation had been manipulated in a South African context for a form of justice-less peace is one understanding, while this same manipulation is defended by the TRC commission as necessary for the peace process.

²⁵³ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 292.

reconciliation on a larger level. This idea leads us to the following chapters, which will offer insights into the social context for this study, Northern Ireland, through an examination of the history and current reality of the region.

CHAPTER THREE: A HISTORY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to offer a brief overview of the history of Northern Ireland. This task is a considerable one, for the idea of a concise, consistent, and agreed-upon history is to some extent impossible to find for this region. Even those who live and work in Northern Ireland, such as the leader of the Corrymeela Community David Stevens, feel that a preface must be made to every history on the subject. Stevens's brief history on Northern Ireland begins with this note:

Nota bene: An Irish health warning. There is no way that a paper of this length can deal with the nuances and complexities of the Irish situation. It can only provide pointers and some basic facts. Even facts and pointers have to be placed in perspective. The perspective and objectivity of the author limits this paper (necessarily).²⁵⁴

It is with this warning that this history of Northern Ireland also seeks refuge. The authors who are used for this analysis are diverse in background and affiliation, and with their description of events come their own contextual perspectives. The hope is that despite their diversity of thought there will be, in some way, a cohesive view into the historical aspects of Northern Ireland. The goal of this section, therefore, is not to represent a completely neutral view on the history of Northern Ireland, but offer a historical view with as many diverse accounts as possible.

²⁵⁴ David Stevens, "A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland," The Official Corrymeela Website, <http://www.corrymeela.org-sitepage-freeresources.aspx> [accessed 28 July 2008].

The history of Northern Ireland has been covered in many volumes by various authors and historians. It is important, therefore, to edit the historical information in a way that offers information important to this research project. The research question focuses on the elements of a social context that influence the development of a theology of reconciliation, so it is essential to understand the context of the Northern Ireland case study. This history, therefore, will give a brief description of the events in Ireland from the 5th century to partition in 1920. With that information offered, the main focus of this chapter will be on the years of the Troubles between 1919-2009.²⁵⁵ The choice of focusing on these years is for two critical reasons: they represent the most violent years of conflict within Northern Ireland and they set a backdrop to the lives of the people who have been interviewed for this research project.

St. Patrick and Early Invasions

The history of conflict in Northern Ireland may start as far back as Ireland's earliest recorded encounters with Christianity in the 5th and 6th centuries by way of St. Patrick. St. Patrick's teachings resulted in a growing interest in faith-based study, in such a way that by the seventh and eighth centuries there was an increase in the establishment of Christian churches, schools, and monasteries throughout Ireland. During this period, Latin was a requirement to Irish scholars, and many young people received training for different forms of religious leadership. This point in history is described as "The Golden Age of Christianity" for the

²⁵⁵ This portion will follow some of the historical divisions offered by the Belfast-based journalist David McKittrick and an Northern Ireland focused academic David McVea in *Making Sense of the Troubles* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2000) .

country and represented a time where Ireland was seen as a leader in Christian education.²⁵⁶ The age was short-lived, however, as the periods that followed represented interludes of invasion and occupation that moved Ireland's resources from education to defense. The Danes first arrived in Iona, an island off the Scottish coast in 795, and subsequently ransacked monasteries and villages up and down the Irish coast for the next forty years.²⁵⁷

Along with the constant threat of invasion, perhaps the greatest continuous setback for the Irish during the 12th century onwards was a lack of "a strong central native monarchy."²⁵⁸ The continuously warring kings within the country left it open to invasion from outside forces. The cultural influence of these invading nations is evident in art, music, and weaponry that would later become synonymous with Irish culture. This is, perhaps, best seen by examining the extensive influence of the Vikings on Irish life.²⁵⁹

But whilst the Vikings were significant in their influence of Ireland, they are viewed as secondary in importance to the 12th century invasion of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans. This invasion began with a disagreement between two powerful Irish kings: Dermot MacMurrough of Leinster and Tiernán O'Rourke of Breifne. The fight, summarised by Irish historian F.X. Martin, consisted of "a tale of raids and counter-raids, of bravery and brutality, of the abduction of O'Rourke's wife, Dervorgilla, of the undying resentment of O'Rourke, [and] of the overthrow and exile of MacMurrough."²⁶⁰ The story, however, does not end with the exile of the former king. MacMurrough, desperate to reclaim his throne in its former state, called upon

²⁵⁶ Kathleen Hughes, "The Golden Age of Christianity," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 76.

²⁵⁷ Liam de Paor, "The Age of the Viking Wars," *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 91-106.

²⁵⁸ Brian Ó Cuív, "Ireland in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 122.

²⁵⁹ de Paor, "The Age of The Viking Wars," 96-9.

²⁶⁰ F.X. Martin, "The Anglo-Norman Invasion," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 123.

the help of King Henry II of England. Henry offered his assistance, tentatively at first, but soon backed a full invasion of the island. It is recorded that by the year 1250, the Normans occupied three quarters of the country.²⁶¹ Concerning this time in Irish history historian F.X. Martin states:

It would be a mistake to think of the Norman Ireland as engaged in continuous deadly warfare with the Gael. Once an area was occupied by the Normans it gained peace and order, where previously there had been raids and counter-raids between warring factions of the great Gaelic families. It is true that war continued in the border areas between the Gael and the Gall, but that was no fiercer than the clash of arms within the Gaelic territories between different Gaelic families or various members of the same family.²⁶²

This occupation of Irish lands by the Normans-English stands as a pivotal point in the history of the country. It represented the moment where Ireland became forever intertwined with an outside government. This ruling body would make, during the following years from the occupation, many decisions on behalf, but not always to the benefit of the country. This came into glaring affect with the Tudor monarchy, specifically through their use of the plantation system.

The Tudors

Ireland was an interest for the Tudors primarily because of its strategic location for their enemies. During the reign of the Tudors, a great battle over power was raging in Europe and also in England. The many regions that Spain occupied through their conquests and explorations threatened England, and their occupation of such lands showed both skill and

²⁶¹ Martin, "The Anglo-Norman Invasion," 137.

²⁶² Martin, "The Anglo-Norman Invasion," 139.

strategy. Therefore, Ireland existed for England as both a necessary stronghold and a potential show of conquest to the rest of Europe.²⁶³

The complete capture of Ireland by English forces gained ground during the reign of Henry VIII. Because of the increase in rebellion from the Irish chieftains against the English earls there began, with Henry's coronation in 1509, a more focused interest in the affairs of Ireland. Ronald Wells explains: "At the very least, he [Henry] was now obliged to defend and protect his fellow countrymen in that land. How much wealth he could recoup from Ireland also became a matter of royal concern."²⁶⁴

Up until this point the English had seen the Irish as different, but reformable to a civilised way of life. This view soon began to crumble as accounts of European conquests to foreign lands brought with them views of the barbaric nature of native peoples. In addition, Liechty states, "English adventurers and thinkers came to regard Irish culture and the Irish as so fundamentally barbaric and pagan that they could not be directly reformed; the native Irish must first be subdued by the sword and trained by the yoke of colonization before they could accept English standards of civility."²⁶⁵ Henry understood that in order to "civilise" Ireland and to, more importantly, gain profit therein he needed to first be the complete ruler of the land. The everyday citizens of England agreed. They saw the surrender of the Irish and, consequently their land, as an opportunity to be a better influence upon those the English saw as pagans. Henry offered the chiefs of Ireland a "surrender and regrant" deal for their lands. Under this contract the chieftains gave their land completely to Henry, who immediately regranted it to their charge. The chieftains were required, under this deal, to disestablish all personal armies,

²⁶³ G.A. Hayes-McCoy, "The Tudor Conquest," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 174-5.

²⁶⁴ Ronald A. Wells, *People Behind the Peace: Community and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 12.

²⁶⁵ Joseph Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism: Chronology and Reflections* (Belfast: Joseph Liechty, 1993), 6.

accept English ways of life, and give their allegiance to the king.²⁶⁶

Although many chieftains agreed to this, it would ultimately prove ineffective as future generations took over the lands of their fathers or relatives without any desire for allegiance to the king. The future kings of Ireland saw little reason to align themselves with any group which sought to control their lands and power. The English, therefore, soon found themselves with little control over the land they had regranted.²⁶⁷

This was the situation when Elizabeth I came to power. Seeing the failures of earlier attempts to control the Irish population and their land, Elizabeth decided to try the use of English-Scottish administered plantation style ownership. This method began in 1567 when some of the local Munster chieftains staged a rebellion against the Queen's armies. After the rebellion was defeated, Elizabeth seized the lands of chiefs and gave them over to the leadership of the English.²⁶⁸ The local chiefs of the southern areas of Ireland tried desperately to rebel, but by 1585, the Queen controlled the areas of Leinster, Munster and Connacht. With these areas existing under English rule with relative peace, the Queen turned her sights to the region of Ulster in the north.²⁶⁹

The Ulster Plantation

Ulster was, at the time of Elizabeth I, the most Gaelic area of Ireland. The Lords of the north were determined, as historian Hayes-McCoy states: "to keep out a president, sheriffs, provost marshals and English lawyers – men without sympathy who would, regardless of the

²⁶⁶ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 13.

²⁶⁷ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 13.

²⁶⁸ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 14-15.

²⁶⁹ Hayes-McCoy, "The Tudor Conquest," 183.

Gaelic communities, abolish all power that conflicted with the Queen's.”²⁷⁰ This sentiment was perpetuated largely by Hugh O'Neill, the earl of Tyrone, who was known as “Ulster's premier chieftain.”²⁷¹ O'Neill grew increasingly upset about the enforcement of foreign laws, the Reformed Church, and animosity towards the Gaelic way of life by the English. In 1595, O'Neill joined fellow Ulster chieftains, such as the Maguire family, in the fight to defend the north from the English. The war continued even after the death of Elizabeth, with few victories for the Irish even with the aid of Spanish allies. O'Neill admitted defeat in 1603.²⁷²

With Elizabeth dead, the new king, James I, came to power in the midst of an English victory in Ulster. Much to the anger of the English population, however, the new king allowed the Irish to keep their land. This tactic seemed strategically detrimental to an English takeover of Ireland, until it was overshadowed by what has become known as the “Flight of the Earls” in 1607. Led by the O'Neills and the O'Donnells, two of the great families of Ulster, over one hundred chiefs and families of Ulster fled to the European continent. Their reason for leaving is the stuff of rumours, with the ultimate answer unknown. What is certain is that, as Joseph Liechty explains: “To the English the flight amounted to a confession of treason; to the Irish it was evidence of intolerable English persecution.”²⁷³ The loss of the earls left Ulster open for attack, and soon thereafter the land owned by the earls in the counties of Armagh, Fermanagh, Londonderry-Derry, Tyrone, Cavan, and Donegal were all claimed by the crown.²⁷⁴

This new acquisition of land allowed the English to have a defensible stronghold in Ireland and also an opportunity to work on the civility of the local population by way of an

²⁷⁰ Hayes-McCoy, “The Tudor Conquest,” 185.

²⁷¹ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 15.

²⁷² Hayes-McCoy, “The Tudor Conquest,” 188.

²⁷³ Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism*, 11.

²⁷⁴ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 15.

English owned and Irish worked plantation system.²⁷⁵ In the eyes of the Ulster Irish, the plantation represented an invasion by an alien culture that spoke a foreign language, worshipped in an unusual pattern, and lived their lives in radically different ways. It is in this plantation culture that the aspects of the modern day conflict are blatantly clear, according to professor of comparative ethnic studies John Darby:

Within 50 years of the Plantation the broad outlines of the current conflict in Northern Ireland had been sketched out: the same territory was occupied by two hostile groups, one believing the land had been usurped and the other fearing that its tenure was constantly under threat of rebellion; the two communities identified their differences in religious and cultural as well as territorial terms; sometimes they lived in separate quarters and, even when they did not, mutual suspicion reinforced their distinctiveness.²⁷⁶

The plantation system soon caused an inevitable rebellion from the local population in 1641. There were massacres of English and Scottish planters and families by the Irish in isolated areas. These violent uprisings helped to fuel the English view that the Irish were savage without any feelings of remorse. Religion also began to play a part in the increasing separation between the Scottish-English settlers and the Irish. David Stevens elaborates:

Moreover, this insecurity [toward the other] was often expressed in religious terms for unlike the native Irish and the earlier Anglo-Norman invaders of the 12th century who were both Roman Catholics, the newcomers espoused an uncompromising Calvinism with an emphasis on Puritan values. It was this religious dimension which effectively prevented the assimilation of the newcomers, with their different culture and traditions, by the native Irish, and sowed the seeds of the present conflict and division.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Marianne Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 85.

²⁷⁶ John Darby, *Scorpions in a Bottle: Conflicting Cultures in Northern Ireland* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1997), 21.

²⁷⁷ Stevens, "A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland," 1.

The continued hardships of the Irish and their dislike of the ways of those who were occupying their native area led to a series of rebellions that began in 1641.

The 1641 Rebellion to The Home Rule Movement

Although the rebellion of 1641 was unorganised and only resulted in sporadic violence, it captured a great deal of attention from those in mainland Europe who had much to gain from an Irish victory over the English. Cornelius O'Mahony, an Irish Jesuit who was writing from Portugal in 1645, stated that 150,000 Protestants had been killed in the uprising. This number, it seems, is grossly exaggerated according to Liechty: "The best contemporary account estimates that 112,000 of English extraction and 504,000 Irish died from sword, plague, and famine between 1641-1652."²⁷⁸ This use of numerical propaganda against the Irish ultimately worked against them, for in 1649 Oliver Cromwell, Lord Lieutenant of the Puritan Army, led a religious and military attack on the local Catholic population. There were massacres in Drogheda and Wexford with victims ranging from soldiers to clergy, mothers and children. Cromwell's defense for his actions was that of "godly vengeance for Catholic massacres of Protestants at the beginning of the rising."²⁷⁹ Liechty states that both of these violent events served the same purpose to each group who was attacked; whether it was 1641 or 1649, it solidified two separate groups of people in Ireland and created anger and distrust against the "other."²⁸⁰

Following Cromwell's death in 1658, Charles II began his reign in England. Charles desired to incorporate the Irish population into the ruling English politics of the time. In doing so, he reversed many of the Cromwellian decisions, namely much of the anti-Catholic

²⁷⁸ Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism*, 16.

²⁷⁹ Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism*, 17.

²⁸⁰ Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism*, 17.

legislation that was passed during his time in Ireland. Upon Charles' death in 1666, his Catholic brother James II took the thrown. The Irish held a great deal of hope in James, as he represented someone who would seemingly be sympathetic to their plight. The English population, on the other hand, opposed the reign of James and invited James' son-in-law William of Orange to take over the thrown. James was forced into exile, but quickly gathered both French and Irish troops in an attempt to overthrow William. Marching to Londonderry-Derry, James attempted to create a stronghold against William. After seven weeks of fighting, James withdrew from the city, only to establish a final stand against William at the river Boyne in 1690. James was finally defeated here, and fled Ireland.²⁸¹

The years following 1695 represented what many call the "Penal Era." According to Liechty: "Beginning in 1695, the Irish parliament, now drawn exclusively from the Church of Ireland, began building up [a] body of fierce laws. For the next two decades, parliament passed many laws directed against Catholic religion, land and political power."²⁸² These laws banned any Catholic or Presbyterian from having a government-appointed position, from taking part in Parliament, or from purchasing land. On the religious front, taking part in Mass was prohibited, as was the training of Catholic clergy.²⁸³ Economically, laws began to be tightened concerning Irish trade, both at home and abroad. The English parliament restricted trade to the American colonies and all but excluded Ireland from the English wool business. As Wells states: "Because the deprivation of market outlets was so serious, some people claimed that these acts, plus the flow of money to absentee English landlords from their poor Irish tenants, constituted a deliberate attempt to keep Ireland poor and subservient."²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Mike Cronin, *A History of Ireland* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 77-8.

²⁸² Liechty, *Roots of Sectarianism*, 21.

²⁸³ Stevens, "A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland," 1.

²⁸⁴ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 17.

The loss of the potato crop, Ireland's most important means of food at the time, in 1845-9, caused a famine that would result in an eventual loss of one million lives. In the summer of 1845, after a long rainy season, a new disease began to affect potato crops in southern England. This particular blight had been seen in the Americas, but this was its first appearance in the Europe. Several scientists took to the task of figuring out a cure for the blight, but their investigations led them to determine it a disease and not a fungus. This diagnosis was incorrect, and the blight swiftly made its way to Irish shores. The initial collapse of the potato crop caused distress, but it was the failure of the second that caused disastrous conditions in much of Ireland. People across the country began to starve. The English and Irish governments worked to establish soup kitchens to aid the Irish, but the lack of funding for such endeavours angered the ailing local population. Fever and diseases such as typhus swept through the country. Death from dysentery was common, as people resorted to eating whatever food-like items they could get in their possession. The hysteria surrounding the famine caused a mass exodus out of Ireland, so much so, that in the aftermath of the famine one million people had died from starvation and over one million had emigrated elsewhere.²⁸⁵

Irish hostility towards the English only grew worse as a result of the famine, for most saw its consequences as a direct result of institutions such as the penal laws.²⁸⁶ By 1848, a large majority of the population of Ireland had moved to the United States. It was in this new population of Irish-Americans that the issue of home rule, by way of armed rebellion, became an important topic. In the United States, James Stephens and John O'Mahoney began an organisation named the Fenian Movement, which later upon its joining with Irish forces in 1858 became known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The goal of the group was to stage a

²⁸⁵ E.R.R. Green, "The Great Famine," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 270.

²⁸⁶ Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, 306.

revolution against the British government through a series of rebellions throughout Ireland. A major uprising by the IRB was planned for 1867, but consequently never occurred because of various arrests of high-ranking IRB leaders by local officials.²⁸⁷

Along with the Irish-led rebellions, the famine converted many British to the cause of Irish Nationalism. One of those converts was Protestant and former Unionist Isaac Butt. Butt was seen as the founder of the movement towards home-rule which began in 1870.²⁸⁸ The result of his leadership was the creation of the Home Rule Party which, because of lack of organisation, was never able to carry the issue of home rule far in Westminster. Butt was succeeded as leader of the party in 1879 by Irish statesman Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell kept the home rule question at the forefront of Westminster politics and gained backing for his cause by way of funders from the United States. He maintained the argument against the high rents that the Irish population was forced to pay on English and Scottish-owned land, and helped to start the Irish National Land League, an organisation created to petition for the rights of Irish tenants.²⁸⁹

The home rule movement carried on, unsuccessfully, until W.E. Gladstone, a prominent statesman of his time, picked it up in 1885. The British House of Commons defeated his first endorsement of Irish home rule in 1886; his second attempt in 1893 was defeated by the House of Lords. During this time period another new movement in Ireland was taking place alongside home rule in the form of the Gaelic League, led by Douglas Hyde. The aim of this league was to create programmes that would restore the Irish language and culture back to prominence in the country. One of the more significant members of the Gaelic League was Patrick Pearse, who

²⁸⁷ Seamus Annaidh, *Irish History* (Bath: Parragon, 2007), 178-82.

²⁸⁸ T.W. Moody, "Fenianism, Home Rule and the Land War," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 282.

²⁸⁹ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 186-9.

worked towards the creation of Irish schools and the development of Irish literature. This movement, along with the constant besieging of Gladstone, helped many in Westminster to see the benefits of home rule.²⁹⁰

In 1912, the third attempt at a movement towards home rule passed through the British Parliament.²⁹¹ That same year 500,000 Protestants in Ireland signed a “Solemn League and Covenant” which pledged their allegiance to the cause against home rule. A year later these protestors established a provisional government in the event that home rule should become a reality. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was created and equipped with means to battle anyone who challenged British sovereignty over Ireland, including the king if necessary. The Irish National Volunteers (INV) was subsequently created to defend against the UVF. As both groups gathered their resources for battle, the outlook looked grim. The buffer in the conflict at home was the start of World War I, which momentarily created a distraction from all other political junctures.²⁹² The result of World War I was a call to arms of all able men to the fight abroad, in the meanwhile leaving behind the decisions that needed to be made on the home front. This led to a reported enlistment of 28,000 UVF and 27,000 INV representatives in the British forces by the end of 1915. It was decided by the House of Commons that in light of the continued fighting abroad the issue of home rule would not be addressed until after the war was over.²⁹³

Both sides of the home rule debate saw World War I as an opportunity to gain support for their side. For Unionists the war served as an opportunity to show their allegiance to the British government. On the Republican side a number of those involved in the INV, including

²⁹⁰ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 236-7.

²⁹¹ Stevens, “A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland,” 3.

²⁹² Stevens, “A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland,” 3.

²⁹³ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, (1992; repr., Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2007), 450-1.

leaders James Connolly and Arthur Griffith, dismissed the call to arms by Westminster and instead focused their efforts in Ireland. Many of these Republicans were also aligned with the IRB, which saw the war abroad as an opportunity to regain control of the Ireland. In 1915, the IRB, led by James Connolly and Patrick Pearse, began planning for an uprising that was set for Easter 1916.²⁹⁴ Despite a series of misfortunes that seemed to destroy the plans, the uprising was not canceled, but delayed to Easter Monday 1916. By noon the IRB had captured several strong points in Dublin, including the local post office. It was from the post office that Pearse read the “Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic,” thus verbally establishing Ireland as free from British rule.²⁹⁵

Those who had captured the public buildings in Dublin found themselves soon trapped, as the needed reinforcements from local civilians did not materialise. Fighting under martial law, the British troops seized the occupied buildings and set the headquarters of the IRB on fire, resulting in the capture of those who were participating in the uprising.²⁹⁶ On 29 April, Patrick Pearse and James Connolly surrendered to the local authorities. The outcome of the uprising was a loss of 450 lives, 2,614 wounded, and £3 million worth of damage to the city of Dublin.²⁹⁷ As a result of the martial law status, and despite protests from both sides, James Connolly and fifteen leaders of the uprising were executed between the 12 and 15 May 1916.²⁹⁸

As World War I continued to rage, the news from abroad was no better than that at home. In a two-day battle beginning on 1 July 1916, 5,500 men of the Ulster Volunteers died or were wounded at the Battle of the Somme. In Ulster, the 12th celebrations, commemorations of the Protestant victory at the Battle of the Boyne, were cancelled and businesses were closed in

²⁹⁴ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 234-5.

²⁹⁵ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 244-5.

²⁹⁶ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 246-7.

²⁹⁷ Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, 453.

²⁹⁸ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 250.

order to honour those who had died in the fighting.²⁹⁹

By the end of World War I in 1918, the subject of home rule again returned to the forefront of Westminster politics. With the seventy-three Members of Parliament (MP) from the newly formed *Sinn Féin*, the political branch of the INV, Westminster found itself again in a position that required a quick decision on the contentious issue. The British government would have no such chance, however, for by November 1918 the *Sinn Féin* representatives had grown tired of waiting for a decision on the issue and consequently withdrew their positions in Westminster in order to create a new parliament in Ireland. The former MPs met in Dublin on 21 January 1919, where they formed the *Dail Eireann (Dail)*, which translates to Ireland's Assembly.³⁰⁰

The First Era of Troubles: 1919-1923³⁰¹

Within its first meeting, the *Dail* established Ireland as an independent country and produced a provisional constitution for their new state. The goal of the new constitution was to create a government that would be recognised by the international community. The new constitution, however, did not automatically create the stable society that the members of the *Dail* had hoped. In 1919, shortly after the first meeting of the *Dail*, Ireland found itself in the midst of a guerrilla-style war between the INV, which had been renamed in 1919 as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and British police groups.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, 455.

³⁰⁰ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 257-8.

³⁰¹ This time period as the start of the Troubles is not agreed upon by all, but is one date offered by this author. Many see the era of the Troubles as existing in two different time periods, one after partition and the other in the late 1960s.

³⁰² Gordon Gillespie, *Years of Darkness: The Troubles Remembered* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2008), 258-61.

Amidst this continued fighting in Ireland, a war that was costing the British taxpayers £20 million a year, Westminster passed the Government of Ireland Act in December 1920. The Act established two governments in Ireland, one in Belfast that would oversee the counties of Antrim, Down, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh and Londonderry-Derry and another based in Dublin which was in charge of governing the rest of the island. The first two years of the creation of the Act saw various uprisings in the form of IRA raids around the newly established borders and in the city of Belfast. From June 1920 to June 1921, 428 people died as a result of these battles, two-thirds of them Catholic.³⁰³

The Government of Ireland Act did not gain approval with either side, British or Irish, and the result was the drafting of an additional treaty in 1921. This document stated that Ireland would be considered a commonwealth state within Britain, but would be independent in status. The following provisions, however, remained in the treaty: “An oath of allegiance to the British crown as befitted Commonwealth subjects, the freedom of Northern Ireland to withdraw from the newly created state and remain within the United Kingdom, and the retention by Britain of certain Irish naval bases.”³⁰⁴ The Anglo-Irish Treaty, as it was known, was approved by the Irish parliament in January of 1922, and the south of Ireland became known as the Irish Free State.³⁰⁵ According to the Treaty the newly established boundaries in Ireland divided the southern region from the six northeast counties. Unionists called the new area “Ulster,” but this name was swiftly rejected by Catholics of the region who knew Ulster to be the original, pre-English, nine-county establishment in the north. The founding of the six counties instead of the original nine was political in nature, and assured that the Protestant community would stay in the majority of the new Northern Ireland. At the end of the partition of Ireland the

³⁰³ David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2000), 4.

³⁰⁴ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 28.

³⁰⁵ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 28.

demographics in the north stood at two-thirds Protestant and one-third Catholic.³⁰⁶

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was followed by a brief civil war, from 1922-3, amongst those in both of the newly established territories who were pro-Anglo-Irish Treaty and those who were against it. The pro-Treaty members, later known by their political name *Fine Gael*, fought as the Free State Army. The anti-Treaty members, *Fianna Fail*, set up a stronghold line from Waterford to Limerick. *Fianna Fail*'s resources, however, were limited, and the Free State Army was well equipped and had more support from outside bodies. The battles cost Ireland dearly, for many important statesmen lost their lives in the fight.³⁰⁷ As the war drew to a close on 27 April 1923, the Free State Army had killed seventy-seven members of the anti-Treaty association. It had also interned 10,000 of the association's members without trial.³⁰⁸ According to Elliott: "Because of the continuing hostilities in much of Ireland (first with the brutal Anglo-Irish war 1919-1921, then with the civil war in the Irish Free State, 1922-3) and the delay in the report of the Boundary Commission, a sense of insecurity and impermanence prevailed."³⁰⁹

With such a sense of uncertainty existing in the both new states, Protestants in Northern Ireland felt it was more important than ever to maintain control. This began, in their eyes, with maintaining power in the government at all times. In the first election for Northern Ireland, in 1920, the Unionist party had comfortably won two-thirds of the seventy-three local authorities. A problem for the Protestants remained with the groups within the region that had voted either to secede from the current state into the south or to not acknowledge the new government at all. This dissonance within Northern Ireland led the new prime minister, James Craig, to re-

³⁰⁶ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 276-7.

³⁰⁷ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 280-1.

³⁰⁸ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 206-7.

³⁰⁹ Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, 373.

establish the boundaries of the counties so that Unionists would ultimately control them.

Therefore, according to Belfast-based journalist David McKittrick and historian David McVea:

“In 1922, the voting system known as proportional representation (PR) was abolished. Its removal was by no means simply a technical adjustment, since it had been built in both as an actual safeguard for Catholic and Protestant minorities in the two parts of Ireland and also a symbol of respect for their views.”³¹⁰

Although seemingly a direct insult to the Catholic minority, the new “first-past-the-post” system was directed more to weed out the independent Unionist representatives. As stated by Irish historian J.L. McCracken: “[First-past-the-post] made next to no difference to the Nationalists,”³¹¹ for the Catholics were never a majority threat. The Unionist sub-groups, however, had tendencies to divide the power of the main Unionist party, which Protestant groups in Northern Ireland saw as being the biggest threat to their majority.³¹²

“The Static Society:” 1924-1963³¹³

Along with the issues that existed in Northern Ireland, the newly partitioned southern area of Ireland was faced with the difficulties of creating a stable government and re-establishing itself after years of war. In the mid 1920s, compulsory education was established, along with lessons in the Irish language for all schools. A national flag was created which held the colours green to represent the Catholic population, orange to represent the Protestant

³¹⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 8.

³¹¹ J.L. McCracken, “Northern Ireland,” in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 318.

³¹² McCracken, “Northern Ireland,” 318.

³¹³ A phrase used by McKittrick and McVea to describe this time period, though I have adjusted the start year to from 1921 to 1924 to accommodate the period of war, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 1.

population, and white in the centre to represent the peace between them. These new establishments worked to replace those of the British government and helped Ireland to become recognised by the international community as an independent nation.³¹⁴

In Northern Ireland, the method of re-drawing geographical and political boundaries helped decide the vote in favor of James Craig and his Unionist party in 1929. Unionists won thirty-seven of the fifty-two seats, such an overwhelming majority that many in the Catholic and Independent communities simply stopped attending debates or even voting at all. This became glaringly obvious in the 1933 vote, when all twenty-seven of the seats remained unchallenged by any opposing forces; therefore, the Unionists won again without a single vote being cast.³¹⁵ In 1932, a structure was built to house the Northern Ireland Parliament. It was placed in Stormont, an area in east Belfast, and was symbolically commemorated by Edward, Prince of Wales.³¹⁶

The only power above that of the established Northern Ireland government was Westminster, and many disillusioned Catholics turned to the governing body for help with what they saw as unfairness in the voting system. The request was to no avail, however, as Craig and his cabinet threatened to resign if Westminster attempted any kind of intervention in the matters of Stormont. This event left Northern Ireland in the hands of a complete Unionist majority on the political front with no checks and balances from abroad. Accordingly, this majority in government extended into local law and justice with the establishment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Although claiming the desire for integration, the organisation would remain more than ninety percent Protestant throughout its existence. The political situation in Northern Ireland was becoming increasingly viewed by the Catholic community as a totalitarian

³¹⁴ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 288-9.

³¹⁵ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 9.

³¹⁶ Robert Kee, *Ireland: A History* (London: Sphere Books, 1982), 226.

regime. According to Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Unionists created laws, policed in favor of the laws, and ultimately judged those who broke the laws.³¹⁷

McKittrick and McVea explain that the years following held little change in terms of government control: “Although there were major economic changes over the [next] decades, the basic elements of Unionist dominance, Catholic powerlessness and Westminster disregard survived relatively untouched even [after] an [event] as cataclysmic as World War II.”³¹⁸ By the end of World War II, the division between the partitioned southern area of Ireland and Northern Ireland had grown considerably. One example was Northern Ireland’s participation in the war alongside the British government.³¹⁹ The south of Ireland, however, took the opposite view in regards to the conflict. During World War I, Ireland had participated alongside the British in order to show loyalty and confirm the assurance of home rule. In this new conflict, however, the partitioned south chose neutrality under the leadership of Eamon de Valera (Prime Minister 1932-48). According to Irish historian Mike Cronin: “In choosing neutrality, de Valera, and the voices that supported him within the *Dáil* and across the country, made the most explicit statement of Irish independence.”³²⁰ Accordingly, in 1949, the twenty-six counties of the partitioned south declared themselves an independent Republic, whilst still claiming sovereignty over Northern Ireland.³²¹ On the other hand, in Northern Ireland, because of the loyalty of those in Northern Ireland who participated in the war, the British government created and passed the Ireland Act in June 1949. This act stated that Northern Ireland would continue to be a part of the United Kingdom until its own government decided otherwise.³²²

³¹⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 11.

³¹⁸ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 22.

³¹⁹ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 216.

³²⁰ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 217.

³²¹ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Ancestral Voices* (Dublin: Poolberg Press, 1994), 130.

³²² Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 217-8.

The 1950s, while still stagnant in terms of government, saw many improvements in the social realm of Northern Ireland. International industry invested in the area, which drew Catholics into jobs of higher management previously unavailable to them because of Protestant bias. The welfare state was broadened and reformed, and the Education Act in 1947 provided free secondary education.³²³ Living standards improved and by 1953 the BBC was broadcasting to homes throughout Northern Ireland.³²⁴

Meanwhile, public support for paramilitary groups declined. This was best expressed through the failure of the attempted IRA campaign of 1956-62. The targets of this campaign were RUC officers and government buildings. These acts of violence, however, were not generally supported by the Catholic population, and many in the local communities aided the authorities in the capture of IRA members. The results of the campaign were the deaths of twelve IRA members and six RUC officers. By 1958, most of the major leaders of the IRA were either dead or captured.³²⁵ Some scholars see this change in public support as a result of the improved social condition of Northern Ireland. One such scholar, Sabine Wichert, states: “[Because] there was a promise of acceptance through economic and social developments on the Catholic side, partition and the border had become less important than the improvement of their own economic, social and political standing in Northern Ireland.”³²⁶

The Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland was occurring parallel to the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States, with similar campaigns for equal rights in the 1950s and 60s. With the establishment of the Education Act in 1947, Catholics in the province were beginning to better understand their history and their status in Northern Ireland.

³²³ Darby, *Scorpions in a bottle*, 30.

³²⁴ Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939: The Persistence of Conflict* (Dublin: Penguin Books, 2006), 182.

³²⁵ Ben Walsh, *The Struggle For Peace In Northern Ireland: A Modern World Study* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2000), 60.

³²⁶ Sabine Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945* (London: Longman Group, 1991), 75.

This led to the establishment of civil rights organisations led by various members of local Catholic society including John Hume, Bernardette Devlin, Ivan Cooper, and Eamonn McCann. The goal of these leaders was to broaden the range of understanding of what they saw to be the second-class citizenship that Catholics held in Northern Ireland. Some of the main areas of public life addressed through their campaigns for equality were the job sector, higher education, and housing.³²⁷

The O'Neill Administration: 1963-8

“The 1960s started as the decade of hope,”³²⁸ states John Darby. So it seemed, as the retirement of the former Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough, brought relief to many Catholics who saw him as an extreme right-wing Unionist. His replacement came in the form of Terence O'Neill in 1963.³²⁹ A known Unionist, O'Neill seemed a mere copy of the previous leadership. The difference, however, was that O'Neill saw the need for Northern Ireland to continue its reforms in order to stay abreast of the changing social climate worldwide.³³⁰ O'Neill stated in 1964: “My principal aims are to make Northern Ireland prosperous and to build bridges between the two traditions.”³³¹

The first public issue facing O'Neill was the decline in much of the industry that traditionally had kept Northern Ireland afloat. Big businesses such as shipbuilding and linens were weakening and the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland was twice that of the rest of the United Kingdom. O'Neill's plan for the economy was to attract foreign business, and to some

³²⁷ Annaidh, *Irish History*, 300.

³²⁸ Darby, *Scorpions in a bottle*, 31.

³²⁹ Darby, *Scorpions in a bottle*, 31.

³³⁰ Kee, *Ireland: A History*, 232.

³³¹ Terence O'Neill, *Ulster at the Crossroads* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 23.

extent he was successful in this endeavour. Businesses such as Grundig, Goodyear and Michelin set up in the region, but their endeavours were hardly large enough to fulfill the jobs lost by the bigger industries. Some of the areas struck hardest by the loss of jobs were north and west Belfast and the city of Londonderry-Derry.³³²

On the political front, the growing economic woes had led many Unionists to start a new political party. The Northern Ireland Labour party (NILP) was a leftist group, consisting of both Protestants and Catholics that held to the union of Northern Ireland with Britain. In the 1962 election, the NILP won four of the fifty-two seats in Stormont. This was significant to O'Neill, for it spoke of Craig's fears of a split in the pro-Union vote.

Another significant issue that same year was the change of power in Westminster to Harold Wilson and his Labour party. Wilson was a known anti-Unionist, and O'Neill was faced with an overseas partner government that had little tolerance for violence and segregation. There was a need for O'Neill to show that he had the initiative to bridge the gap between the communities in Northern Ireland in order to maintain some support in Britain. He did this by being the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland to visit Catholic areas and schools. By the mid 1960s it also became clear to O'Neill that for Northern Ireland to grow economically, it needed to extend peaceful relations southwards. O'Neill, therefore, proposed a meeting at Stormont to Sean Lemass, the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland that would focus on trade between the two regions.³³³

The meeting at Stormont was a bold step by both parties, and O'Neill and Lemass are reportedly quoted as saying they were likely to get into a great deal of trouble for their participation in cross-border talks. Sentiments on both sides, however, seemed positive overall

³³² McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 28.

³³³ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 28-9.

concerning discussions during these meetings, and on 14 December 1965 O'Neill and Lemass signed the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement. The Agreement opened trade relations between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and gave hope for a more amicable future between the two governments.³³⁴

Amidst all the goodwill there was opposition to the intentions of O'Neill, most notably in the figure of the Rev. Ian Paisley. Paisley was born in 1926 to a Protestant pastor who held firm to the Calvinist doctrine. Paisley followed his father into the ministry and attended the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Hall in Belfast. In 1946, he was ordained and became the head pastor of the Ravenhill Evangelical Mission. After successfully splitting the congregation, he gathered his supporters and created a new denomination in which he was permanent moderator, the Free Presbyterian Church.³³⁵ During the IRA campaign of the mid 1950s, Paisley became involved with a Protestant extremist group known as the Ulster Protestant Action (UPA). His oratory skills were like no other at the time, and he soon became a dominant executive member of the UPA. According to historian Sabine Wichert: "He [Paisley] thrived on confrontation and protest and succeeded in embarrassing Unionist governments whenever they showed the slightest tendency towards moderation in their position."³³⁶

At first Paisley was seen as a simple religious fanatic, but his way of gaining public support caused many to worry about his effect on Stormont and the O'Neill government. The first confrontation between the two figures was on 25 March 1963, the day Pope John XXIII died. O'Neill called for the flags at the city hall in Belfast to fly at half mast in honour of the man who he saw as having initiated various social reforms in the Roman Catholic Church.

³³⁴ Patrick Lynch, "Ireland Since the Treaty," in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (1967; repr., Cork: Mercier Press, 1978), 337-8.

³³⁵ Marcus Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul 1500-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 361.

³³⁶ Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945*, 95.

Paisley quickly staged a protest outside of city hall to express his outrage at such a gesture. He was fined £10 and asked to leave the premises, but the main significance of this act was that it was the first of Paisley's many political uprisings. On 27 September 1964 he protested again, this time at the *Sinn Féin* headquarters in west Belfast. The flag of the Republic of Ireland flew above the building, which was illegal, but for general purposes overlooked. Paisley stated that if the flag was not removed from the building, he would go in and remove it himself. On 1 October, the RUC moved into the compound and removed the flag. Arguments over flags, however, were relatively small matters in comparison to the anger that possessed Paisley after the meeting between O'Neill and Lemass. Paisley and supporters protested on Stormont grounds the day after the Prime Minister had left, holding flags stating: "No Mass No Lemass." When O'Neill went to the Republic for a return trip on 25 February, Paisley held an even larger protest with banners saying: "King William crossed the Boyne to save us – O'Neill crossed it to sell us."³³⁷

In 1966, Paisley started the *Protestant Telegraph*, a newspaper geared towards the Unionist population. With Paisley and other right-wing Unionists putting an increasing amount of pressure on O'Neill, tempers began to run high. A rising working-class Protestant population, who saw nothing in common with the Prime Minister, began to organise themselves into factions. As Republicans prepared to celebrate the fifty-year anniversary of the 1916 uprising, members of a newly formed version of the UVF were meeting in pubs in the Shankill district of Belfast. The result of the revival of the UVF was three deaths attributed to sectarian violence in the course of two months. None of the people who were killed in this period had any connection to the IRA, which was the ultimate hope of the newly formed UVF. The three victims were: a 77-year-old Protestant widow who died from a petrol bomb, a Catholic man in the Falls district

³³⁷ Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars*, 362.

of Belfast, and a Catholic teen in the Shankill area of Belfast. O'Neill saw his support crumbling as many of those associated with the Protestant Orange Order, a Unionist group dating back to 1795, joined the campaign against his reforms.³³⁸

The removal of the flag at the *Sinn Féin* offices caused discontent among the Republican communities as well. Riots took place after its removal, and Catholic communities were outraged at the partiality of the police force. These events, as Ronald Wells believes, “signaled the beginning of the end of uninterrupted Unionist dominance.”³³⁹ New special-interest groups began to form in light of the riots, including the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). Taking on much of the rhetoric and political actions of the movements in the United States at the time,³⁴⁰ the association began in February 1967 and had five goals:

- to define the basic rights of all citizens;
- to project the rights of the individual;
- to highlight all possible abuses of power;
- to demand guarantees for freedom of speech, assembly, and association;
- and to inform the public of their lawful rights.³⁴¹

NICRA had a list of demands for the government in power, many of them issues that had been on the minds of Catholics for centuries. These included: “One-man-one vote in local elections, removal of gerrymandered electoral boundaries, laws against discriminations in local government and machinery to deal with complaints, allocation of public housing on a points system, repeal of the Special Powers Act, [and the] disbanding of the B Specials.”³⁴² The first open demonstration in support of these new rights was a sit-in by Austin Currie, a young

³³⁸ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 35-6.

³³⁹ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 31.

³⁴⁰ Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis* (New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988), 210.

³⁴¹ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 31.

³⁴² James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2004), 50.

Catholic, in Country Tyrone in June 1968. Tyrone had many complaints throughout the years of its Protestant preference in terms of housing allocation. In the case of this protest, two Catholic families had been overlooked for a house in favour of an unmarried nineteen-year old Protestant girl. Currie remained in the girl's house in protest until he was removed by the RUC.³⁴³

One of the first major marches of the Civil Rights Movement occurred in August of 1968. The route of the march was from the village of Coalisland to the town of Dungannon. Perhaps the most famous scene of this march was the singing of "We Shall Overcome," a traditional anthem in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In a pattern that would become commonplace in demonstrations, a counter-demonstration was organised by Ian Paisley's Ulster Protestant Volunteers in Dungannon. Thanks to a prepared police force and peaceful protestors, there was no reported violence between the two groups at their meeting.³⁴⁴

A second march, in October, followed in the same way as the first and was to occur within Londonderry-Derry. William Craig, Minister for Home Affairs, banned the protest, which only caused an even greater number to march. In light of the media around the event, the RUC armed themselves with water cannons and batons to defend themselves against potential violence as a result of the march. The scene that met the protesters in Londonderry-Derry was tragic. Dublin news stations captured violent images that were replayed over and over on local television.³⁴⁵ RUC officers were shown violently attacking the marchers with batons. The Londonderry-Derry hospitals reported the deaths of seventy-seven civilians in the fight, most of whom died from blunt trauma to the head. In the days following the incident there were vast amounts of sit-ins, protests, and marches throughout Northern Ireland. O'Neill scrambled to find some sort of concession to those who had lost loved ones in the incident. Feeling extreme

³⁴³ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 40-1.

³⁴⁴ Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars*, 367.

³⁴⁵ Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945*, 50.

pressure from Wilson and Westminster, O'Neill offered a reform package to the country that seemed to quell the protests momentarily.³⁴⁶

The Second Era of Troubles: 1969-1993

1969-71

By the start of 1969, a new civil rights group had emerged: the People's Democracy (PD). The PD was a leftist group composed mostly of students whose goal was, as Northern Ireland focused historian Mike Cronin describes, "aimed at radicalising the whole political landscape, and transforming the political battle away from an internalised, Stormont-led reform of Northern Ireland, and to a wide-ranging questioning of the legitimacy of the state."³⁴⁷ This group planned a march from Belfast to Londonderry-Derry in January 1969. While crossing the Burntollet Bridge, right outside the city, the group was attacked by Loyalists. The attack was similar to that of previous marches, with batons and stone throwing, and many of the marcher's attackers were later identified as off-duty police officers. As in previous marches, the media was present for the event. It was a stinging PR disaster for the RUC.³⁴⁸ Along with the obvious repercussions from the march, this event ultimately signaled a complete loss of trust in the patrolling force by the Catholic population.³⁴⁹

In February 1969 O'Neill, having lost an increasing number of supporters, called an election. O'Neillites won out, but lost a large number of votes to Paisley supporters and fellow

³⁴⁶ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 41.

³⁴⁷ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 231.

³⁴⁸ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 48.

³⁴⁹ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 233.

Unionists. O'Neill won by less than 1,500 votes and with his influence all but gone, he resigned on 28 April.³⁵⁰ In retrospect, O'Neill is seen as both a reformer and a failure, genuine and fake.

McKittrick and McVea put it this way:

O'Neill faced a nationalism reinvigorated by the Civil Rights Movement and enlivened by a new generation of bright young leaders. From the Unionist side came not fresh thinking but Ian Paisley, a highly disruptive and destructive element, as well as opposition from within his own party. O'Neill also faced a demanding British prime minister in the person of Harold Wilson. One of the greatest ironies of O'Neill's career was that he was in 1963 the first significant figure to start talking of change and reform, and in 1969 he was brought down when the debate over change spiraled out of control.³⁵¹

O'Neill's successor was James Chichester-Clark, a relative of the former leader and a local farmer in County Londonderry-Derry. He was a former Irish Guards officer, and was not particularly interested in politics. The position was basically thrown at him, for his family members had held seats in Stormont since partition. Chichester-Clark stated that he would continue to press for the reforms of O'Neill.³⁵²

Chichester-Clark was welcomed into his newly-appointed position by an incident that became known as the Battle of the Bogside on 12 August 1969 in Londonderry-Derry. The violence involved individuals from the predominately Catholic area of the Bogside in Derry and a Protestant group called the Apprentice Boys. The Apprentice Boys organisation was similar to the Orange Order, but focused on the annual celebration of the Siege of Londonderry-Derry in 1688-9. This event saw the overthrow of the Catholic James II of England by the Protestant William III, and thus The Apprentice Boys celebrate the victory by way of a series of annual

³⁵⁰ Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars*, 369-70.

³⁵¹ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 52.

³⁵² McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 53.

parades.³⁵³ Stormont and the Wilson administration debated on whether or not to allow this march, knowing that tempers could flare at such a display. Eventually permission was given, and the march began as it always had. Soon, however, the Apprentice Boys, who were known as a “more militant”³⁵⁴ group within Unionism, began throwing pennies from a wall into the Bogside community. This act symbolised, to the Catholics of the area, the continuous oppression from the Unionist community, and the whole area erupted into riots. The battle lasted for three days, with the Bogside community violently rebelling against the local police. Violence continued on 15 August where Catholic-owned houses on Bombay Street, a street located between the contentious Shankill-Falls area of Belfast, were burned by Loyalists.³⁵⁵

Violence followed much of the marching season in 1969 in the areas of Londonderry-Derry and Belfast, and the RUC seemed to be all but losing control of the situation. The Northern Ireland government was forced to turn to Wilson for help. The Prime Minister sent British troops into the Bogside, as well as the Ardoyne and Falls areas of Belfast. The troops were welcomed by the Catholic population at first, but their appearance seemed too late. By the end of the August the damage was clear, with eight deaths, 750 injuries, and 180 buildings demolished, all a result of the continued violence in the area.³⁵⁶

A major incident during this time was a thorough investigation of the RUC’s involvement in the deadly marches by Wilson’s aid Lord Hunt. What followed was known as the Hunt report, and resulted in the end of the B Specials, who were part-time police in their local communities, and the disarming of the RUC. A new head of policing, Sir Arthur Young, was established as a reformer to the current police. There was a major backlash against these

³⁵³ The Apprentice Boys of Derry, “Thirteen Questions and Answers,” The Apprentice Boys of Derry Official Website, <http://www2.apprenticeboys.co.uk-features/about/us/13/questions> [accessed on 16 July 2010].

³⁵⁴ Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), 8.

³⁵⁵ Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster*, 417.

³⁵⁶ Thomas Hennessey, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of The Troubles* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 2005), 222-4.

reforms, as Loyalists took to the streets in the Shankill Road area. This resulted in the first member of the RUC to die, Constable Victor Arbuckle, shot by a Loyalist protestor.³⁵⁷

During this turbulent time there occurred a renewed interest in paramilitary groups on both sides of the fight. Cronin observes:

Alongside the political changes of the early 1970s a steady resurgence of paramilitarism was taking place. Certain groups were becoming disenchanted with the attempts at, or lack of, reform, and were being mobilised, instead, around the constant upsurges in rioting, intercommunal violence and attacks on opposition meetings.³⁵⁸

The Loyalist paramilitary groups that began to reorganise were the UVF and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). The Catholic paramilitary continued to have the Dublin-based IRA, which was viewed by most in Northern Ireland as completely oblivious to the conflict at hand. After several heated meetings between members within the IRA and *Sinn Féin*, splinter groups were formed. The Provisional IRA and the Provisional *Sinn Féin* parted ways with the IRA and *Sinn Féin* respectively and formed their own political groups. The original groups had a desire to continue working at reforms through political means, while the provisional divisions believed that military action was the only way for change.³⁵⁹ Also in the Catholic arena was the creation of the Social Democratic and Labour political party (SDLP) on 21 August 1970. This group consisted of anti-Unionist Stormont representatives, lead by Gerry Fitt and John Hume. This party would continue to be the largest Nationalist party throughout the Troubles.³⁶⁰

Northern Ireland saw a number of significant attacks in 1971. In February, in north

³⁵⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 57.

³⁵⁸ Cronin, *A History of Northern Ireland*, 234.

³⁵⁹ Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 59.

³⁶⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 64.

Belfast, the first IRA member was shot by the army, and likewise the first British soldier was shot by the IRA.³⁶¹ On 1 March, a bomb was placed in County Tyrone with the hopes of being found by Loyalists. Instead it killed five civilians who were looking to service a BBC transmitting device. Later this same month, three off-duty Scottish soldiers aged seventeen, eighteen, and twenty-three were led to the outskirts of Belfast and shot by the IRA. These killings were especially chilling to the public, for they were the first against soldiers outside the realm of actual live conflict. A few days after the funeral of the three young soldiers, John McCaig, Joseph McCaig, and Dougald McCaughey, an overwhelmed Chichester-Clark stepped down from office.³⁶²

Brian Faulkner succeeded Chichester-Clark as Prime Minister in March 1971. He was the first prime minister to have neither military training nor a landed gentry's background. Upon taking power, Faulkner was faced with the threat of direct rule by the British government if things continued as they had in Northern Ireland. His answer to this issue was to toughen sanctions against paramilitary groups and to try and maintain order with as little help from the British government as possible.³⁶³ Faulkner was determined to take a strong stance against those who he considered leaders of paramilitary organisations. On 9 August 1971, British forces were sent out to retrieve those believed to be the ringleaders of the Republican paramilitaries. The result was 342 arrested, all Republicans, many of whom were imprisoned on false information and who were ultimately interned without a trial.³⁶⁴

In the aftermath of these arrests, rioting broke out across Northern Ireland. Twenty-two

³⁶¹ Kee, *Ireland*, 239.

³⁶² Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 30.

³⁶³ Wichert, *Northern Ireland since 1945*, 156.

³⁶⁴ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 33.

people were killed and thousands more forced from their homes.³⁶⁵ The next six months of internment would see over 2,400 people taken into custody, many of whom were immediately released, which further fueled the claims that the police force under Faulkner was ineffectual. According to Mike Cronin: “For the remainder of 1971, Northern Ireland teetered on the brink of outright civil war while the Stormont government struggled to maintain order.”³⁶⁶ By the turbulent end of 1971, a total of 170 people had been killed, 2,600 had been injured and a staggering 17,000 homes had been searched.³⁶⁷

1972-3

As a result of the unfair treatment that resulted from internment without trial, NICRA stated that they would hold a march and a rally in Londonderry-Derry on 30 January 1972. Security was to be maintained by the British-led Parachute Regiment that was brought in from Belfast for the event. Although accounts vary, at some point the Regiment began firing over a hundred rounds of ammunition into the crowd. By the end of the day, thirteen people were dead and many others injured. This event became known as “Bloody Sunday” and it marked the beginning of the most violent year of the Troubles.³⁶⁸

The following weeks saw more violence in the region, with the IRA staging an attack on the Parachute Regiment headquarters. Their attempts at revenge instead resulted in the deaths of a Catholic chaplain, a gardener, and five female members of the household staff. Shortly thereafter, the IRA bombed a Belfast city center pub, the Abercorn. Two women were killed

³⁶⁵ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 235.

³⁶⁶ Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945*, 82.

³⁶⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 70.

³⁶⁸ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 235.

and seventy were injured in the blast. Two weeks after this incident a 200lb car bomb planted by the IRA went off close to Belfast city center. The blast left 150 people injured.³⁶⁹

As a result of these attacks, Prime Minister Wilson declared a direct rule by Westminster over Northern Ireland on 24 March 1972. In July of that year, the IRA detonated two bombs in little over an hour. The result, which became known as “Bloody Friday,” killed nine and injured 130. On the last day of July, nine people were killed in the town of Claudy, County Londonderry-Derry. Those included were a child and several elderly citizens.³⁷⁰ By the end of 1972, almost 500 people were dead. There were 2,000 explosions, 10,000 shooting incidents, 5,000 injuries, and almost 2,000 reported robberies. As Wichert observes, “If the imposition of Direct Rule, while risking Protestant rebellion, was intended to break the vicious circle of violence by giving Catholics what they were supposed to want and gaining their cooperation against terrorism in return, it certainly had not succeeded.”³⁷¹

In the spring of 1973, talks with the parties of Northern Ireland resulted in the creation of the *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals*.³⁷² The paper laid out a plan for government that supported a return to proportional representation and an election of a new Stormont that would include all the major parties (Unionist and Nationalist).³⁷³ The paper encouraged the connection between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and proposed a Council of Ireland to serve as a liaison between the two. All parties, especially Unionists, had issues with the paper. In June 1973, however, elections were held for the new assembly. Unionists against the new proposal won twenty-seven seats, while Unionist supporters of the proposal won

³⁶⁹ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 78.

³⁷⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 87

³⁷¹ Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945*, 162.

³⁷² *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals: March 1973*, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk-hmso-cmd5259.htm> [accessed 30 April 2011].

³⁷³ Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars*, 376.

twenty-two. Faulkner saw himself in charge of a splintered Unionist party while the Nationalists had an almost united group in the SDLP. The meetings themselves were, as McKittrick and McVea describe, “a forum for division rather than a new start...[the meetings] set a pattern of repeated unruly gatherings, with hours of rowdy and rancorous debate, many obstructive points of order and a great deal of personal abuse.”³⁷⁴

Amidst growing animosity, the three main parties of Northern Ireland met with the London and Dublin governments in Sunningdale, Berkshire in order to reach an agreement concerning the future government of Northern Ireland. The issues at hand involved the setup of a new government, the function of a cross-border Council of Ireland, north-south relations and constitutional status.³⁷⁵ By the end of the meeting both parties appeared to have gained and lost, according to McKittrick and McVea:

As the parties returned to Northern Ireland, Unionists could point to a reassuring Irish declaration on Northern Ireland’s status, a law commission to tackle cross-border security problems and a Council of Ireland which they argued was largely toothless. The SDLP could claim victories in securing a role at the highest level of government, together with new all-Ireland institutions with the potential to evolve.³⁷⁶

After much debate the Council of Ireland was decided: seven Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland ministers with a consulting branch made up of members from Irish parliament. The Northern Ireland government would continue to consist of a joint government between the Unionist and Republican parties, and the Council of Ireland would have a role in the oversight of policing.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 94.

³⁷⁵ Kee, *Ireland: A History*, 239.

³⁷⁶ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 97.

³⁷⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 97.

The newly established power-sharing executive met for the first time on 1 January 1974, but not without controversy. In May 1974, a two-week strike began among the Unionist workers in protest against the Sunningdale Agreement. The Ulster Worker's Council (UWC) led the strike and in its wake brought together two groups: Loyalist paramilitaries and anti-Agreement Unionists. According to Mike Cronin: "The strike was so successful because it was supported by the bulk of the Protestant population, and brought the Province to a complete standstill: public services were halted, factories closed and the supply of petrol, gas and electricity were greatly reduced or stopped all together."³⁷⁸

After two weeks of the strike, Faulkner resigned from the executive, stating that there was no hope for further communication. This was mostly in part to the newly formed United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC). The Council consisted of members of the UUP, DUP, and Vanguard parties. They disagreed with the overall points made in the Sunningdale Agreement, most importantly the power given to the Council of Ireland.³⁷⁹ The new government had lasted only five months. Merlyn Rees, who had become secretary to Northern Ireland during the Sunningdale Agreement, felt the only option was a constitutional convention that involved different politicians from both sides. Rees's hope was that the politicians would be able to make some decisions among themselves without the intervention of the British government. With the politicians otherwise occupied, Rees turned his sights on what he believed to be the most pressing issue of the time: the IRA.³⁸⁰

In 1974, Rees legalised *Sinn Féin* and the UVF in order to begin talks with their

³⁷⁸ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 237.

³⁷⁹ Darby, *Scorpions in a Bottle*, 77.

³⁸⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 105-6.

respective members. These discussions led to an official declaration of IRA ceasefire from 1974-5. This, however, did not stop the violence on a smaller scale, for in the autumn of 1974 IRA members staged a campaign in both Northern Ireland and parts of England. As talks continued between Rees and the organisation, a brief ceasefire was promised during the Christmas holiday. Rees, in return, did not sign any new internment orders and agreed to scale down law enforcement in Catholic areas. The ceasefire lasted until 1975, but oftentimes existed in name alone, with the IRA engaged in violent exchanges with the UDA and UVA. In December, Rees declared that internment was over and released the last of the internees, but made no steps towards proclaiming any intention of British withdrawal.³⁸¹

As the violence continued, so did the plan for Rees's convention. In May 1975, elections were held. The UUUC won forty-seven of the seventy-eight seats, while Faulkner's UPNI party took less than eight percent of the vote. The convention was not as vocal and disorganised as the previous, as the Unionists knew that they were in complete control over the proceedings. With a comfortable majority in the convention, the UUUC drew up a report of things they wished to see occur in Northern Ireland. The requests included the revival of Stormont with more powers than before, double the representation in Westminster, and a pledge to the Queen by those holding major offices.³⁸²

Meanwhile, 1975-6 was a time of even more violence in the region, claiming almost 600 lives. In one day in October 1975, twelve people were killed by UVF shootings and bombings, with most of those killed being Catholic. Perhaps the most famous killings during this time were by a group referred to as the Shankill Butchers. Seven Catholics died between the years of 1975-6 at the hands of this notorious group. The Butchers operated in the Shankill area and

³⁸¹ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 238.

³⁸² Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change*, 120-1.

used cleavers, axes and butcher knives to slice their victims' throats or to torture them to death.

In January 1976, the IRA attacked a bus of Protestant workers, resulting in ten deaths; following an increase of anti-Catholic UVF attacks. The death, however, that received the most publicity in these years was in July 1976. A landmine outside his residence in Dublin blew up the car of Christopher Ewart-Biggs, British ambassador to the Republic. The IRA took credit for the assassination, and relations between the Anglo-Irish communities rose to a new height of contempt.³⁸³

1977-9

Roy Mason, Rees's replacement as Northern Ireland Secretary in 1976, made it clear from the beginning that he had no interest in talking with the IRA, only defeating them. He also proclaimed that any move towards deals such as the Sunningdale Agreement were in the past and no longer considered valid in the wake of the current situation. Although this was good news for the Unionists, they remained frustrated that Westminster was preventing a return to majority rule. In May 1977, members of the UUUC declared an indefinite strike for June. Many in the organisation disapproved of this decision, so Ian Paisley and Ernest Baird created the United Unionist Action Council (UUAC) consisting of members from the UUUC, UWC (Ulster Workers' Council) and the UDA who approved of the strike. After only a few days it became apparent that this strike would not be as powerful as the first. With Mason in power the UUAC felt that a protest was unnecessary. The strike eventually ended with little accomplished in terms of change. In fact, 1977 was best known not for the strike but for being the year in which the violence level dropped dramatically. It would become forever known as the turning point of

³⁸³ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 115-6.

the Troubles.³⁸⁴

Along with changing authority figures came a change in the way IRA members were legally handled once captured. The abolishment of juried trials for Troubles-related cases was established in 1972, and the lack of witnesses willing to testify meant that the conviction of IRA or any paramilitary members had reached an all time low in 1977. The only way, in the eyes of those in charge, to get a conviction was for the criminal to confess his or her crimes to an interrogator. Interrogation centers, such as Castlereagh in Belfast, were established for such a purpose. Members of the UVF and the IRA soon began to complain of illegal methods of interrogation, mostly through physical violence. The result was that, as McKittrick and McVea describe: “Before long, most cases heard by the non-jury courts consisted of the prosecution producing an incriminating statement or statements which the defendant was said to have made voluntarily while in Castlereagh or one of the other interrogation centres.”³⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the IRA held a series of campaigns that attracted extremely negative media attention, and many in the local community assumed that the organisation would soon call an indefinite ceasefire. This action never occurred, however, as the IRA became increasingly interested in the ways interrogators were extracting confessions from inmates. In 1978, the human rights organisation Amnesty International investigated the methods used by those at the centres. A full report offered a list of reforms necessary for the continuation of the centres, including a method for logging complaints by inmates. These reforms caused the number of grievances by inmates to decline dramatically.³⁸⁶

In the spring of 1979, the IRA was joined by the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), another high-profile Republican group. The group was smaller than the IRA but

³⁸⁴ Darby, *Scorpions in a Bottle*, 77.

³⁸⁵ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 124.

³⁸⁶ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 124.

became an increasing threat from the late 1970s onward. The assassination that brought the INLA the most media attention was of Airey Neave. Neave served as a campaign leader for Margaret Thatcher in 1975, and was viewed as being the next Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He was killed when a car bomb exploded underneath his vehicle as he left the House of Commons. Thatcher had only been in office for a few months when on 27 August two more acts of violence occurred. An IRA bomb went off on the boat of Lord Mountbatten, the Queen's cousin, off the shores of the Republic of Ireland. Hours later, the IRA attacked and killed a group of eighteen soldiers in Warrenpoint, between the border of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.³⁸⁷

1980-1

In light of the death of Neave, Humphrey Atkins replaced Roy Mason as Secretary of Northern Ireland under Margaret Thatcher. Humphrey declared in 1979 a desire to have another conference for the various governmental parties in Northern Ireland. In 1980 a paper was distributed outlining the intentions for the meeting. The paper offered a new understanding concerning the Northern Ireland government by the Thatcher administration. There would be no talk of a revival of Stormont, nor the Sunningdale Agreement. In a surprising statement, the paper ruled out all possibility of any Irish dimension to the new government. The paper was an indication of continued measures by the Thatcher government to crack down on the violence in Northern Ireland through direct rule.³⁸⁸

A further development in the attempt to maintain order in the region was a revocation of

³⁸⁷ Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles*, 15.

³⁸⁸ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 135-6.

the status of political prisoner for paramilitary members. As Northern Ireland's Secretary of State, William Whitelaw had established, in 1972, a "special category status" for paramilitary prisoners. This allowed the prisoners to wear their own clothes, live amongst one another, and exist in relative control of their own lives. In 1975, Meryln Rees announced that this special status would be removed, and the new prisoners would wear prison uniforms and be forced into regular holding cells with the general population.³⁸⁹ Republican paramilitary groups rebelled against such action, and refused to wear clothes at all. These inmates became known as the "blanket men." In 1977, up to 150 inmates had stopped adhering to the laws of the prison. Accordingly, the IRA set up campaigns against prison workers. From 1976-80, nineteen employees of the Maze were killed, including a deputy governor.³⁹⁰

In 1978, the prisoners had been protesting for three years with no visible change and a lack of support from the outside. The prisoners decided to change their tactics by starting a "dirty protest." They refused to leave their cells, empty their chamber pots, remove uneaten food, bathe, or shave. Although these extreme measures were taken seriously by the prison guards, they gained little lasting publicity, and by 1980 had become commonplace. The last resort occurred in October 1980 when seven prisoners began a hunger strike. Their demands were: the right to wear their own clothes, no prison assigned work, weekly letters, association with one another, visits and packages and forgiveness for any penalties acquired during the protests.³⁹¹

The prisoners were up against a hard administration in the form of the newly elected Thatcher. She saw the inmates as terrorists, and had lost a friend to their violence, so she was less than open to any demands on their behalf. Through the Northern Ireland Office a few of the

³⁸⁹ Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945*, 187.

³⁹⁰ Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945*, 187.

³⁹¹ Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles*, 62.

requests were considered, but only if the prisoners stopped the strike immediately. In December 1980, amidst several extremely ill hunger strikers going to the local hospital, the protest was called off. Despite the controversy concerning the hunger strikes, the death toll in Northern Ireland dropped dramatically in 1980 from the previous years, with the attacks from both sides focusing on specific targets as opposed to mass bombings.³⁹²

A second hunger strike organised by the prisoners of the Maze began on 1 March 1981 which introduced an interval style method of protest. The first of the prisoners to stop eating was the IRA member Bobby Sands. Sands had been arrested for possession of a gun while on an IRA mission, so he lacked the blotched past that might have otherwise given him a less heroic status amongst the Catholic population. As he continued his denial of food, he became more revered outside of the prison. This was ever-present in his election to the Fermanagh-South Tyrone Westminster seat, which required that he beat out the Unionist Harry West. It was a huge victory for the Republican cause, and Sands instantly became a key method of propaganda for the IRA. Sands died on 5 May 1981, and although he gained little sympathy from Thatcher or the British government, over 100,000 people attended his funeral. Between May and August, ten hunger strikers died, but with the pleas of families and local priests the strike was eventually called off in 1981.³⁹³ Because of their support of the hunger strikes, several Republican sympathisers were targeted by Loyalist paramilitaries from 1980-1, including Bernadette Devlin, a MP for Mid-Ulster and a key participant in the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s.³⁹⁴

³⁹² Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 239.

³⁹³ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 239-40.

³⁹⁴ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 239.

The summer of 1982 saw a string of violent acts by the IRA towards Britain on their home soil. This occurred by way of two attacks on 20 July 1982. The targets were British soldiers and the results were eleven dead. The first attack was in Hyde Park in London, as a bomb went off while troops rode from Knightsbridge barracks to Whitehall. The second bomb attack killed seven military bandmen as they played in an open-air pavilion in Regent's Park.³⁹⁵ In December 1983, a car bomb detonated outside of Harrods department store in London. The store was filled with Christmastime shoppers, and resulted in six deaths.³⁹⁶

In reaction to the attacks, the RUC created a Special Services sector that focused on defense against the IRA and INLA. They were known as the E4A and their motto was "Speed, firepower and aggression."³⁹⁷ Within one month the E4A was responsible for the deaths of five people in County Armagh. The first of these deadly encounters was between three IRA members and the police. One hundred and nine shots were fired into their vehicle, resulting in their deaths. The second incident involved two teenage civilians, one shot and killed and the other injured. The last involved two INLA members who were also shot in a car. In each of these scenarios there were serious questions concerning the special force's use of violence against potentially innocent victims.³⁹⁸

Another increase in security during the mid-1980s involved the use of a method known as supergrass. As McKittrick and McVea define it: "The supergrass system entailed persuading former members of such groups [paramilitary] to testify against their alleged former associates,

³⁹⁵ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 144-6.

³⁹⁶ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 161.

³⁹⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 153.

³⁹⁸ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 153.

in exchange for a new life outside of Northern Ireland. Immunity from prosecution was sometimes granted along with payment.”³⁹⁹ The use of supergrass was protested by Republicans, Unionists, and human rights organisations, but its continual use was due mainly to its effectiveness. Nearly 600 people were arrested based on the informants and oftentimes several arrests were made on one testimony. This led many to question the method’s integrity if one person’s word was enough to place another in jail. The courts use of supergrass soon lost momentum, as an increasing amount of successful appeals were appearing in the court system because of a lack of evidence. Although unsuccessful, the use of the supergrass method defined the agenda held by the leaders of the day, and despite its failure Thatcher continued to work towards a renewed sense of safety in both Britain and Northern Ireland.⁴⁰⁰

Thatcher had tried once before to open relations with the Republic of Ireland through several meetings in 1980 with the then *Taoiseach*, Charles Haughey. Although these talks began well, they ended poorly and nothing was accomplished. The Republic of Ireland was left relatively unconcerned with British relations until the hunger strikes in Northern Ireland. The hunger strikes caused a great number of people to join the political party *Sinn Féin*. Citizens who scoffed at the idea of joining the IRA felt as though *Sinn Féin* was doing the same work, but on a political front. In the four elections that followed the strikes from 1982-1985, *Sinn Féin* emerged as the fourth largest of the Northern Ireland political parties.⁴⁰¹

Many people in the *Dáil* were concerned with this new development, especially the *Fine Gael* leader Dr. Garret FitzGerald. FitzGerald thought it necessary, in light of the rise of support for *Sinn Féin*, to consult with Thatcher on ideas of political and security matters. Thatcher agreed, although her interests lay completely within the security realm. A series of thirty-six

³⁹⁹ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 154.

⁴⁰⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 154.

⁴⁰¹ Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, *Northern Ireland’s Troubles*, 62.

meetings and negotiations took place over the next year. In November 1985, both Thatcher and FitzGerald signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The document gave the Republic a key role in the governing of Northern Ireland, and it also stated that the people must approve any change in the status of Northern Ireland.⁴⁰² Unionists protested the signing of this Agreement, as they saw it as a means of offering power to a foreign government over their affairs. The Republicans were hopeful, for they saw in the document a chance that the United Kingdom might not have control of Northern Ireland forever.⁴⁰³

1986-93

The late 1980s to early 1990s saw a slow deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations. Nationalists had a great deal of hope after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but as the Unionists protest grew louder and stronger, Thatcher was forced to put a halt on any further progression with the Agreement. Many Republicans, tired of waiting on the political front, went underground with the IRA. This time, they had the help of Libyan ruler Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi had helped the IRA in the 1970s by supplying guns and ammunition. He resumed this practice in 1984 when his relationship with the United Kingdom began to falter. Gaddafi sent an incredible amount of weapons to Northern Ireland, as McKittrick and McVea describe:

⁴⁰² Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 242-3.

⁴⁰³ Wichert, *Northern Ireland Since 1945*, 194-5.

Four separate shipments of arms made their way from Libya to Ireland in the mid-1980s, bringing the IRA around a thousand rifles together with fearsome armour-piercing rounds which could cut through even protected police vehicles, SAM-7 missiles and anti-aircraft guns capable of downing helicopters and planes, and even flame-throwers.⁴⁰⁴

This addition of weapons added a new sense of confidence to the IRA. The group ran missions from 1985-87 that resulted in multiple casualties. Perhaps the most famous of these events took place in the town of Enniskillen on Remembrance Day 1987. Large groups of Protestants had gathered together for the annual Remembrance Day parade and service. Just behind the observers was a community building which held, among other things, an IRA explosive device. The bomb exploded, causing pieces of the building to come crashing down on those below. One man, Gordon Wilson, was trapped alongside his daughter under the rubble. Wilson would eventually be rescued, but his daughter did not survive the blast. Wilson became well known for publicly offering a hand of forgiveness to the IRA almost immediately after the event took place. By the end of the day eleven people were dead and more than sixty injured as a result of the Enniskillen bomb. The publicity from this event marked the IRA as an extremist, terrorist organisation in the world community. Later that same month French authorities discovered weapons being transferred from Libya to Northern Ireland and informed the British authorities.⁴⁰⁵

In March 1988, in the British province of Gibraltar, there occurred one of the most debated incidences in the Troubles. Three IRA members were shot by Special Air Service patrol forces, but were later found to be unarmed. While it is thought that their intent was to set up a bomb in the region, they still were not in possession of firearms at the time of death. Several witnesses stated that the members had tried to surrender right before their executions. The

⁴⁰⁴ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 170.

⁴⁰⁵ Darby, *Scorpions in A Bottle*, 133.

Republican community immediately condemned the deaths and thousands attended their funerals.⁴⁰⁶

By 1991, IRA attacks had once again begun to increase, but this time their goal seemed to target destruction in England. In February 1991, an attack occurred directed against Margaret Thatcher at her residence, 10 Downing Street. Mortar bombs were thrown into the yard of the complex, and although no one was injured, serious questions concerning her personal security were raised. Another attack in England came in April 1992. The IRA set off two bombs in the financial centre of London known as the Baltic Exchange. Three people died in the blast and over £700 million worth of property damage occurred. In November 1992, another bomb went off in the financial district of Bishopsgate London. This time the damage was stated to be worth billions of pounds.⁴⁰⁷

The Peace Process

1993

It had been unknown to the general public that for many years underground talks were taking place between the British government and members of the IRA. These talks became known as the “back-channel.”⁴⁰⁸ They began in 1990 and only became public in 1993 when *Sinn Féin* politician Gerry Adams was caught entering the home of John Hume, a key player in the Sunningdale Agreement. There was public outrage from both sides of the divide at the idea that Hume or Adams would be negotiating with one another. After an increasing amount of

⁴⁰⁶ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 153.

⁴⁰⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 183.

⁴⁰⁸ Cronin, *A History of Northern Ireland*, 245.

public disapproval from both Northern Ireland and Great Britain, Hume and Adams issued a joint statement. It stated that the Nationalist population, while moving forward in the way of peace, would always have the need for an Irish dimension in any agreement forged with the United Kingdom.⁴⁰⁹

These talks between the two men continued through 1993, even in the midst of the worst violence in one year that Northern Ireland had seen since 1976. Many expected that this violence would end the peace process, but instead it only caused it further success. John Major (Prime Minister after Margaret Thatcher) and Albert Reynolds (*Taoiseach* after Charles Haughey) met with the hopes of drafting a document that might lead to an IRA ceasefire. The result was the Downing Street Declaration in December 1993. The Declaration held no real promise for British departure from Irish affairs. Instead it read, “The British government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination the basis of consent, free and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.”⁴¹⁰

1994-6

On 31 August 1994 the IRA declared, “A complete cessation of military operations. We believe that an opportunity to create a just and lasting peace has been created.”⁴¹¹ The weeks after the ceasefire were riddled with suspicion from the Loyalists who believed that they were simply a hoax. By October of 1994, however, with the ceasefire still holding, the major Loyalist

⁴⁰⁹ Cronin, *A History of Northern Ireland*, 245.

⁴¹⁰ For excerpts see Darby, *Scorpions in a Bottle*, 206-9.

⁴¹¹ “IRA Public Statement: August 1994,” The Official *Sinn Féin* Website, <http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/15213> [accessed 2 May 2011].

paramilitary groups followed suit. A similar statement from the Combined Loyalist Military Command was issued on 13 October, but this group cautioned that their ceasefire was completely reliant on the continued agreement made by the IRA. With these proclamations of peace from most of the groups, some of the paramilitaries' focus turned to politics, as many hoped to be a part of the political process. As the months passed with few incidences of violence, people began to believe that life without violence was finally an option for Northern Ireland.⁴¹²

In February 1995, a booklet created by Dublin-born Seán Ó hUiginn was published and became known as the *The Framework Documents*.⁴¹³ According to McKittrick and McVea, "The Framework Document[s] envisaged Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom, stressing the importance for Unionist consent. But it stipulated that the Irishness of Nationalists should be formally expressed through progressively increased Dublin input, most tangibly through new cross-border institutions."⁴¹⁴ Although all parties did not agree upon the document, it was still a major work towards community relations, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The hope was that the document would lead to further negotiations between groups such as the IRA and the British government. The hope was unfounded, with both the Irish and British governments demanding immediate decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons in March 1995. By May of that year, when *Sinn Féin* finally met with the British ministers, they came empty-handed, for they were still no closer to any form of decommissioning.⁴¹⁵

With increasing demands by the British government towards the paramilitary groups, a

⁴¹² Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles*, 64.

⁴¹³ Seán Ó hUiginn, *The Framework Documents*, In *Scorpions in a Bottle: Conflicting Cultures in Northern Ireland*, written by John Darby (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1997), 210-12.

⁴¹⁴ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 203.

⁴¹⁵ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 204-5.

sense of imminent danger began to grow. Tensions were high by mid-year, and many feared the always hostile marching season. The Orange Order marches were particularly contentious, as many took place in predominately Catholic areas. One such march was the located in Dumcree, County Armagh. Traditionally this march led the members of the Order down Garvaghy Road. This road was a known Catholic area, and in the wake of the crumbling ceasefire the RUC hoped to reroute the march down a different route. The Orange Order refused and was eventually allowed to walk their original path, amidst violent protests from the local Catholic community.⁴¹⁶

Following a series of discussions between the Irish and British governments, an international body was established to offer suggestions on issues such as marching and decommissioning. The head of this body was former United States Senator George Mitchell. Mitchell spent time studying the relationships between the various political parties within Northern Ireland. Based on his work, Mitchell created a report that stated that the best way to continue the ceasefire was to have a parallel decommissioning and party talks. British Prime Minister John Major did not agree with the report, and instead called for an election, while still demanding decommissioning. The result was IRA retaliation at Canary Wharf, London on 9 February 1996. A bomb blast killed two people, damaged property and successfully halted the peace process. June 1996 brought a new surge in IRA violence, in particular a bomb in Manchester that injured more than 200 people. July 1996 saw the return of the Orange Order marching season, and a repeat of the previous years' Dumcree incident.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 246-7.

⁴¹⁷ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 247.

1997-2000

In May 1997, Tony Blair became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Working with his new Secretary to Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, Blair enlisted the additional guidance of United States President Bill Clinton and *Taoiseach* Bertie Ahern to aid him in the peace process. By the end of 1997, the IRA had declared another ceasefire, this time in a far less public manner than the previous. After, as Mike Cronin describes, “a series of intensive negotiations, threats of walk-outs, the spectre of renewed paramilitary violence and the emergence of anti-Agreement factions within both the Nationalist and Unionist camps,” the main parties and the two governments signed the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement⁴¹⁸ on 10 April 1998. The Agreement called for: participation in a gathered assembly by all parties that agree to avoid the use of violence, permanent ceasefires by paramilitaries and the decommissioning of their weapons, the alteration of the Republic of Ireland’s constitution which states sovereignty over Northern Ireland, and the creation of a committee to investigate issues that cause distress in both communities such as marching and the RUC.⁴¹⁹

By July 1998, violence had returned on both sides of the communities. Again the situation involved the annual march through Duncree, but this time the march was banned in accordance with the new Agreement. There was rioting in the streets that left fifty-seven homes and buildings damaged, twenty-seven vehicles destroyed, and eighty-nine others damaged. August saw violence from a splinter IRA group designating themselves the “Real IRA.” On the 15 of August 1998 the group set up a 500lb car bomb in a busy area in the town of Omagh in County Tyrone. Twenty-nine total fatalities occurred as a result of the bomb and over 700 were

⁴¹⁸ Summary of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement, Stevens, “A Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland,” Appendix V.

⁴¹⁹ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 248.

injured.⁴²⁰

The issue of decommissioning continued to hinder hopes of progression in Northern Ireland, for several parties refused to participate in any governmental activities if weapons had not been destroyed. In July of 1999, Tony Blair called a deadline for the gathering of the Northern Ireland Assembly for the 15th of that month. In light of the failed decommissioning, the Ulster Unionist Party refused to participate in the Assembly and Blair was forced to call on the help of George Mitchell once again. Mitchell's goal was to evaluate the logistics of a full decommissioning of weapons by paramilitaries. According to Mitchell's ten-week review, the reality of a full decommissioning could occur by May 2000. In light of the report, on 2 December 1999 the Northern Ireland Assembly took power of their own government, which included members from the UUP, UP, DUP, SDLP, and *Sinn Féin*. The leader of this new Executive was UUP leader David Trimble. Despite the hopeful beginnings, decommissioning still had not occurred by January 2000, and the UP left the Executive. By 3 February 2000 Northern Ireland was again under the direct rule of the United Kingdom.⁴²¹

2001-2009

Despite the hopes of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement, there was still unrest on a local level in Northern Ireland. On 18 June 2001, in the highly contested upper Ardoyne area of Belfast, Loyalists protested in front of the local Catholic school, Holy Cross Girls' Primary School. The participants in the protest were angered Loyalists in the Ardoyne area who were upset over Republican attacks on UDA flags. These flags had been placed in what were

⁴²⁰ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 223-4.

⁴²¹ Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 249-50.

considered by Republicans to be neutral areas of the local neighbourhood. The protest escalated into violence when, on 18 June, riot police were called in to help parents safely get their children to school. What followed was a violent altercation between the protestors, the riot police, and the parents of Holy Cross children. Stuck in the middle of the riot were the children themselves, and the images of their terrified walk to school caused outrage in the local Catholic community. The incident, according to some, showed the lack of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement's ability to change local community relations.⁴²²

In 2001, on the political front, the IRA agreed to begin decommissioning its weapons in order to be able to participate in a Northern Ireland government. On 23 October 2001, the IRA issued a statement confirming that they had put a number of its weapons out of use for the sake of the peace process. Upon this new development, the UUP re-entered the Executive to continue work towards a power-sharing government.⁴²³ Despite the promises of decommissioning, however, several suspected IRA events, including the murder of Belfast man Robert McCarthy on 30 January 2005, maintained the continued threat of the collapse of the government in Northern Ireland.⁴²⁴ Politicians within the DUP used these violent events as a way of linking the IRA and *Sinn Féin* and thus aiming to increase their votes in the 2005 election.⁴²⁵

In 2005-6 progressions towards a working government continued. The Northern Ireland elections of May 2005 had solidified the two main political groups in the area: *Sinn Féin* and the DUP. This election result was in sharp contrast to that of 1997, with the DUP and *Sinn Féin* seeing an increase in votes by 125% and 37.5% respectively. Conversely, the UUP and SDLP

⁴²² Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 265-8.

⁴²³ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 270-1.

⁴²⁴ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 277-8.

⁴²⁵ Peter Shirlow and Colin Coulter, "Enduring Problems," in *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed. Marianne Elliott (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 210.

had a decrease in votes by 50.7% and 34.7%.⁴²⁶ The IRA continued to decommission weapons until 28 July 2005, when the organisation announced an end to armed fighting in Northern Ireland. Accordingly, on 1 August 2005, the British government agreed to reduce the number of troops stationed in Northern Ireland from 10,500 to 5,000. In September 2005, an independent body that was set to monitor the IRA decommissioning issued a public document stating that they believed the IRA had successfully decommissioned all of their available weapons. By February 2006, the Independent Monitoring Commission, a group established to evaluate the volatile circumstances in Northern Ireland, declared publicly that though paramilitaries in the area were still involving themselves in illegal activities, the level of cross-community violence was decreasing.⁴²⁷

With the continued announcements by the IRA concerning decommissioning and movements toward non-violence through 2006-7, the DUP began to consider a move towards a shared government with *Sinn Féin*. On 28 January 2007, *Sinn Féin* agreed to support the work of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), an institution that Republicans had previously acknowledged only as a Loyalist organisation.⁴²⁸ Government elections were again held on 7 March 2007, with the DUP and *Sinn Féin* again establishing themselves as the first and second largest political groups respectively.

On 26 March 2007, Ian Paisley (DUP) and Gerry Adams (*Sinn Féin*) met for talks concerning the devolution of the Northern Ireland government from direct rule by the United Kingdom. The talks among the parties were successful, with both the DUP and *Sinn Féin* agreeing on a devolution date, 8 May 2007. The lead up to devolution involved a series of meetings between Ian Paisley and *Taoiseach* Bertie Ahern in Dublin as well as members of

⁴²⁶ Shirlow and Coulter, "Enduring Problems," 211.

⁴²⁷ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 282.

⁴²⁸ Formerly known as the RUC.

Sinn Féin and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. On 3 May 2007, the UVF issued a statement declaring a decommissioning of all weapons and a desire to work with the newly formed government. The day of devolution, 8 May 2007, saw both Ian Paisley (DUP) and Martin McGuinness (*Sinn Féin*) affirming their positions as First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland respectively. The discussions between the two men were positive, and there appeared a general concern for moving past the era of the Troubles into a new time period in the history of Northern Ireland.⁴²⁹

Through 2008 and into 2009, both major political parties continued to work towards a completely devolved government from Westminster to Stormont. The decision was made to create a single department in the Assembly that would advise on policing and justice in the region. After this decision was made, the main issue of contention was the establishment of a Minister of Justice, who would effectively lead this department. Disagreements over this position, and its responsibilities, delayed decisions in the Executive for weeks, and threatened to destroy the progress of devolution. In the fall of 2008, a compromise was reached when both *Sinn Féin* and the DUP agreed that a member from the cross-community party should fill this position.⁴³⁰

In the wake of these breakthrough political decisions, however, came a new wave of violence in the spring of 2009. On 7 March 2009, the Massereene army barracks, located in County Antrim, were attacked by dissident Republicans. The results of the attacks included several critical injuries and two British soldiers dead, Patrick Azmíkar and Mark Quinsey. Just forty-eight hours later, PSNI officer Stephen Carroll was shot while responding to a call. The

⁴²⁹ Gillespie, *Years of Darkness*, 282-286.

⁴³⁰ Chris Thornton, "DUP and SF break logjam on policing," *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 August 2008, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/dup-and-sf-break-logjam-on-policing-13930092.html> [accessed on 20 July 2010].

Real IRA and fellow dissident Republican group the Continuity IRA took responsibility for the attacks. The result was a public backlash against the groups, with marches and peace rallies taking place in Belfast, Londonderry-Derry, Newry, Lisburn, and Downpatrick.⁴³¹

These events raised into question the effectiveness of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement, the continued peace process and the future of reconciliation within Northern Ireland. Many see the Agreement as “managed polarisation”⁴³² whereby each respective political party is only working to secure their own aims with little desire to work with the “other.” And despite the hope that the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement would cause an increase in voting for the UUP and SDLP, this has proven to be unsuccessful.⁴³³ What has occurred is that the two main political parties have increased their constituency and have thus furthered the gap between Nationalists and Unionists. This divide, along with continued violence in the area, leaves a difficult challenge for those working for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The following section will offer a brief window into the understanding of reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and in many ways will summarise the chapter through its explorations into Northern Ireland history and politics.

⁴³¹ Claire McNeilly, “Exclusive: The night I was riddled with bullets at Massereene Army barracks,” *Belfast Telegraph*, 21 August 2009, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local/national/exclusive-the-night-i-was-riddled-with-bullets-at-massereene-army-barracks-14462127.html?startindex=-1> [accessed on 20 July 2010].

⁴³² Shirlow and Coulter, “*Enduring Problems*,” 209.

⁴³³ Shirlow and Coulter attribute this move to the problems with decommissioning, the opting out of voting by the middle class, and continued violence between Catholics and Protestants. Shirlow and Coulter, “*Enduring Problems*,” 209-10.

A Summary of the Historical use of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

The National Level in Northern Ireland

The current political reality of Northern Ireland, including the various political parties, has been discussed previously in this chapter and they are vital to understanding a national view on the idea of reconciliation. Reconciliation has, since the peace process primarily, become a flash word for the politicians of Northern Ireland, and its overuse has caused many to see it as having little meaning. Clegg and Liechty explain, “The concept of reconciliation is criticised from at least two main angles: some politically-oriented critics see reconciliation as a weak-minded, establishmentarian alternative to the real task of justice and structural change, while its conservative religious critics condemn reconciliation as a matter of crying peace where there is no peace.”⁴³⁴ David Stevens adds, “It [reconciliation] has been used to quiet people down and lead them away from the reality of their situation.”⁴³⁵

Perhaps the most important historically significant illustration of government use of the word reconciliation exists in the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement where government officials aligned themselves firmly with the work of the reconciliation communities such as Corrymeela and Cornerstone stating:

The participants recognise and value the work being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation and mutual understanding...accordingly they pledge their continued support to such organisations and will positively examine the case of enhanced financial assistance for the work of reconciliation.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 43.

⁴³⁵ Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 22.

⁴³⁶ The Belfast-Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998) <http://www.nio.gov.uk-agreement.pdf> [accessed on 3 March 2011], 23.

This not only set reconciliation as an important aspect of the work of the politicians of Northern Ireland, it likewise made it seem as though the reconciliation communities were also closely associated with the government financially. It appeared that the those in power were attracted to the understanding of reconciliation that was spoken about in places like Corrymeela, despite the fact they were coming from a theological perspective, and so in turn adopted the words and associations used by the reconciliation communities.

According to Robin Wilson, leader of the think tank publications *Democratic Dialogue*, the understanding of reconciliation changed as the peace process progressed. The word was used extensively in the negotiations between *Sinn Féin* and the DUP as a means of expressing a desire for political stability and community-building. It has since been associated with a simple idea of co-existence, which in itself is a strained reality for Northern Ireland. According to conflict researchers Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly: “Due to the limited success of the ‘peace process’ in Northern Ireland, reconciliation at this level is incomplete.”⁴³⁷

The issue, according to Johnston McMaster, is that historically the two groups have held feelings of distrust and fear concerning one another’s intentions in politics. It is difficult for the two political groups to make decisions, and it is difficult for citizens to stand behind politicians who were once so heavily associated with paramilitary groups in the era of the Troubles. As McMaster explains: “Northern Ireland was born in conflict, violence and bloodshed, and what happened in 1969, and lasted for thirty years, was but the most recent phase in a long and troubled history. Northern Ireland still struggles with unfinished business.”⁴³⁸ This continued separation of parties at a political level has caused many to distrust not only politics in Northern Ireland, but any ideas that politicians stand behind, including reconciliation. This is best

⁴³⁷ Hamber and Kelly, “A Place for Reconciliation?” 14.

⁴³⁸ McMaster, “Reconciliation: The Irish Experience,” 1.

expressed in a criticism of those people in positions of influence and their insistence on reconciliation by Patrick Roche in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

The error is the claim that forgiveness and reconciliation have application as moral imperatives to all situations of wrongdoing and specifically to terrorism. The implication of this understanding is that the victim of a terrorist act is under moral obligation to “forgive” and be “reconciled” to the terrorist. Proponents of this view (clerics, politicians, journalists and the members of the various bodies established in Northern Ireland to “deal with the past” to name but a few) fail to realise that the attempt to extend forgiveness and reconciliation to situations of terrorist criminality is in fact morally and legally incoherent.⁴³⁹

Today, as a result of this skewed version of political reconciliation, both a political and theological backlash has occurred in the area of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Reconciliation has become a word associated negatively with the government’s inability to come together, and increasingly politicians have begun to stop using it in the public sphere.

Gladys Ganiel, a lecturer in conflict resolution and reconciliation explores the removal of reconciliation in Northern Ireland public documents in an essay titled, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Northern Ireland can do better.”⁴⁴⁰ Ganiel discusses the changes between the use of reconciliation in the *Shared Future*⁴⁴¹ document, created in 2005, and the *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration*⁴⁴² consultation document, created in 2010, both from the office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. She states that from 2005 to 2010 the use of reconciliation,

⁴³⁹ Patrick J Roche, “Why Should We Shake the Hands of Reconciliation?” *Belfast Telegraph* (25 January 2010) <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/why-should-we-shake-the-hands-of-reconciliation-14650918.html#ixzz1Gxt4JbQX> [accessed 18 March 2011].

⁴⁴⁰ Gladys Ganiel, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Northern Ireland can do better,” 4 October 2010, <http://www.gladysganiel.com/victim/cohesion-sharing-and-integration-northern-ireland-can-do-better-> [accessed 22 February 2011].

⁴⁴¹ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland* (March 2005) http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/reformatted_final_print_version_csi_-_26.07.10.pdf [accessed on 3 March 2011].

⁴⁴² Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (2010) http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/reformatted_final_print_version_csi_-_26.07.10.pdf [accessed on 3 March 2011].

so prominent in the *Shared Future* document, is never mentioned in its potential replacement the *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* consultation document.⁴⁴³ There is, instead, words that denote mutual understanding which Ganiel understands to be something akin to “benign apartheid.”⁴⁴⁴ Truth and justice are likewise not addressed in the document, and Ganiel understands this to be a consequence of a lack of understanding by the government when it comes to the nuances of reconciliation:

The related issues of “dealing with the past” and victim-survivor support are also not integrated into CSI. Again, comparative international research and experience demonstrate that reconciliation is much more difficult when the past is buried or ignored (rather than debated and discussed through public institutional forums), and when the needs of victims and survivors are not taken adequately into account.⁴⁴⁵

Though Ganiel does not go into great detail concerning why the document has left out reconciliation, it can be gleaned that those in government saw the negative response that reconciliation received when used in the political front. When examined from this angle, it appears that politicians realised they could express their opinions without using such a contentious word. Likewise, they no longer had to expect calls for justice and truth from those who adhered to a four part system of a theology of reconciliation, such as the reconciliation communities. They could, without reconciliation, continue to ignore pleas for justice and truth and advocate for “mutual accommodation.”⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Ganiel, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.”

⁴⁴⁴ As defined by Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg in *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 175. Ganiel, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.”

⁴⁴⁵ Ganiel, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.”

⁴⁴⁶ Ganiel, “Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.”

The Local Level in Northern Ireland

Perhaps the first publication that extensively examined local opinions on the conflict in Northern Ireland was *The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland*.⁴⁴⁷ The Report included local views on contentious issues in Northern Ireland, and was composed in 1992 by researchers from an independent organisation called the Initiative '92. The goal of this group was to gain insight into national issues in Northern Ireland by those who were living in the region. Those interviewed ranged from members of paramilitaries to schoolchildren, as there was a desire by the Initiative to study views from all facets of the community. The results were local insights on national issues such as politics, culture, religion, identity and economics.

An overarching theme of those interviewed was a general lack of urgency expressed when it came to a resolution between the two groups in Northern Ireland.⁴⁴⁸ The Initiative came to the conclusion that this lack of urgency was a result of two types of local understandings of politics. The first understanding expressed was that the conflict in Northern Ireland is manageable, and thus does not affect the everyday life of most in the area. Therefore, many people in Northern Ireland have existed violence free, and thereby do not feel as though the conflict is a major issue.⁴⁴⁹ Accordingly, because many find the violence manageable, there is less pressure placed on politicians to negotiate. This is referred to as the “opting out of the middle class.”⁴⁵⁰ According to the report, the middle class in Northern Ireland represent a group, who has in the past years, either moved out of the turbulent working class areas or never

⁴⁴⁷ Torkel Opsahl, Padraig O'Malley, Eamonn Gallagher, Marianne Elliott, Lucy Faulkner, Ruth Lister and Eric Gallagher, *A Citizen's Inquiry: The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland*, ed. Andy Pollak (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993).

⁴⁴⁸ It should be noted this is a pre-Belfast-Good Friday Agreement study.

⁴⁴⁹ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 9.

⁴⁵⁰ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 10.

lived in these areas to start with. Because of the specificity of the violent areas, the few in Northern Ireland have experienced the majority of the violence.⁴⁵¹ This has created a reality where the majority of the population believe the violence is manageable, thus there is a lack of pressure placed on politicians. Similarly, with the addition of the historical notion of direct rule from Westminster, there is oftentimes a feeling of removal from politics by the general population.⁴⁵²

When discussing the ideas surrounding culture and identity, the Initiative noticed an attempt by both sides, as they phrased it, “to articulate confusion.”⁴⁵³ For Protestants, those who were interviewed identified themselves far more frequently based on religious associations as opposed to their nationality. There was also a theme from Protestant interviewees concerning distrust for the Catholic Church and its political involvement in Northern Ireland. From a cultural perspective, Protestants in the study felt as though their cultural heritage was seen as less important than that of the Catholic population. There was also a feeling that Protestants had become vilified in the local context. The result of this vilification is an increased level of defensiveness concerning acknowledged political injustices against Catholics by the government.⁴⁵⁴

Catholics in the study expressed a continued distrust towards Protestants because of negative views on issues such as the pope. They also expressed resentment over years of victimisation by the local Protestant government and politicians. They saw Protestants dislike of Catholics as based on a Protestant desire to remain British despite being a part of Ireland.⁴⁵⁵ The

⁴⁵¹ According to the Report, by 1992 40% of all deaths as a result of the Troubles took place in north and west Belfast. Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 9.

⁴⁵² Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 12.

⁴⁵³ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 95.

⁴⁵⁴ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 95-8.

⁴⁵⁵ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen's Inquiry*, 96-7.

commission of the report claimed that both sides held dear their “victim theology”⁴⁵⁶ which places the “other” as being the main cause of violence and disruption in Northern Ireland, whilst maintaining that their side has continuously been abused accordingly.

As the Opsahl findings stated, the degree of violence varied significantly based on the area in which the individual interviewed lived. An overwhelming degree of these violent acts have, and continue to take place on the interfaces, or those areas of Protestants and Catholics that are divided by walls or other man-made structures. In a more recent study of the views of those living in Northern Ireland, the Community Relations Council (CRC) interviewed people living in interface areas about their idea of the future of Northern Ireland. In September 2007, these views were made into a paper that was later discussed by public service organisations within the local Belfast community including the PSNI, the CRC, the Department of Education (DE) and the Belfast City Council (BCC) among others. The goal of this paper was to better understand the life of those who were in the most violent areas of Belfast. Included in the report was a brief overview of the reality of the interface situation in Belfast, reporting eighty-eight physical barriers within the city.⁴⁵⁷ In addition, surveys were created to measure people’s views on the existing barriers, and were likewise posted to those living in six areas of Belfast: the Falls and Shankill in west Belfast; Antrim Road and Tiger’s Bay in North Belfast; and Short Strand and Templemore Avenue in east Belfast.

The results of the surveys served as stark reminders of the remaining violence in certain areas of Northern Ireland, with a majority of those questioned stating that they would not agree with the walls coming down at the moment. The reasoning behind this belief, the majority felt, was that it was too soon, that trouble would start again and that it was just not safe enough in

⁴⁵⁶ Torkel Opsahl et al., *A Citizen’s Inquiry*, 97.

⁴⁵⁷ Community Relations Council, *Towards Sustainable Security: Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast*, (Belfast: Community Relations Council, 2007), 11.

their areas for such an action to happen. Sixty-seven percent of those polled strongly agreed that the interface walls made them feel safer whilst sixty-four percent of those strongly agreed that keeping the communities separated was the reason why the walls should remain.⁴⁵⁸ An overall summary of the study concluded that local residents were willing to consider having the walls come down in some future, but not in the current situation. When asked why they felt it had to be the future, residents cited shortcomings in community leaders, politicians and also the PSNI in controlling violence in their respective areas.⁴⁵⁹

In a similar study in 2007, Michael Hall who serves as Coordinator for the series *Island Publications*, a series of pamphlets examining issues in Northern Ireland through local discussion groups, published a series of papers on local views of reconciliation within Northern Ireland. In one such paper he examines the understandings of reconciliation by those who are working at a grassroots level, as he describes it, including the interface communities of the Shankill Road and the Springfield Road.

The discussion groups began, with the introduction of the idea of reconciliation in connection with funding for community service projects in Northern Ireland. There was an overwhelming feeling of resentment by those community workers interviewed towards funders and their lack of interest in any project that did not include the words reconciliation or peace.⁴⁶⁰ Oftentimes, those interviewed were unclear of what the word reconciliation meant, other than what was offered to them by the speeches and actions of public figures. This has led to a disassociation with the idea of reconciliation, and thus many interviewed do not want to be associated with anything that was considered under the theme of reconciliation. One community worker added: “[At her organisation] you weren’t concerned with ‘peace and reconciliation’;

⁴⁵⁸ Community Relations Council, *Towards Sustainable Security*, 34-5.

⁴⁵⁹ Community Relations Council, *Towards Sustainable Security*, 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Michael Hall, ed., “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” *Island Pamphlets* 82 (April 2007): 4.

you were concerned with the basics of community life: housing, a sense of belonging, a sense of ownership, and you stuck to that. Ironically, by focusing on the basics you stand a far better chance of promoting lasting peace and reconciliation than the horde of ‘P&R’ projects out there at the moment.”⁴⁶¹

Reconciliation is seen as an easy word to use, says those who were interviewed, and involved playing into the public’s emotions by use of manufactured moments of reconciliation. As one participant stated: “What I would like to know is how, and when, this concept of ‘reconciliation’-as a response to communal problems-emerged. Now that might seem an odd question, for wasn’t it always there? But when the Troubles started not only community activists but government viewed the solution quite differently.”⁴⁶² This different way of viewing the solution, according to the participant, involved the creation of the first Community Relations Commission at the start of the Troubles which put pressure on the government to keep community development as their top priority. This is a transition from the government of today which, according to those interviewed, has washed its hands of local problems and development.⁴⁶³

When asked what the actual reality of reconciliation in Northern Ireland looked like, the community workers discussed the idea of the victim mentality that members of both sides of the divide hold. One worker on the Shankill Road discussed how Catholics once felt as though they were victims of discrimination, but how now Protestants feel as though they are in this position:

⁴⁶¹ “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 27.

⁴⁶² “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 25.

⁴⁶³ “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 26.

But take somewhere like the Shankill, which, despite once believing itself to be the “heart of the Empire,” now feels it is on the beaten side. People wouldn’t say that very loud, but they do say it—that it’s on the way down. And those two things aren’t healthy if we can’t understand what’s happening and connect them. We’re going to have to switch-over from a victim mentality from the people who used to feel they were victims to the people who now feel they are victims, and that isn’t healthy.⁴⁶⁴

This idea of victimhood connected strongly with community workers and it helped to explain why they were so disconnected from the word reconciliation. The community workers spoke of the general disappointment in the idea that those who existed under the umbrella of reconciliation did not pursue truth, or as they understood the word truth, acknowledgment for past wrongs. One worker stated: “Those who suffered directly know only too well what the reality of the conflict was. But very few of those who took part as combatants, and those who gave them their unquestioning support, have really begun to analyse the nature of ‘war’ and what it did to this society.”⁴⁶⁵ The overall view of the study, however, was that reconciliation was indeed a false goal for Northern Ireland at this time, one community worker added: “For the reality is that we’re now stuck with a concept [reconciliation] which we didn’t start out with, but yet if we don’t adhere to it, we can soon find ourselves outside the funding loop.”⁴⁶⁶

Conclusion

Given its history, both ancient and modern, Northern Ireland is unlikely ever to know perfect peace, for the Troubles have added fresh grievances to ancient differences and there are many fresh and painful scars.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 29.

⁴⁶⁵ “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 29.

⁴⁶⁶ “Reconciliation: A False Goal?” 24.

⁴⁶⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, xi.

John Whyte, the famous Irish historian, stated in his inaugural lecture at Queen's University, Belfast in 1983: "In proportion to the population, there might well be as much research available on Northern Ireland as on any other part of the world. While there may be hundreds of books and articles written on the conflict, there is little consensus amongst the numerous interpretations of the violence which has affected Northern Ireland."⁴⁶⁸ Whyte's comments reflect the overwhelming amount of material on the subject of the history of Northern Ireland. While the various Northern Ireland historians tell major events in relatively the same fashion, their presentation and emphasis are all different. From the most seemingly unbiased research may come a hint of favouritism in one direction or the other. It can start, for example, in an emphasis on the amount of high-profile IRA killings or the seeming rejection by the Unionists to talk of compromise, or as one researcher in Northern Ireland observed: "Unionists will never fairly share power and Republicans will never give up violence."⁴⁶⁹ These thoughts lead readers to take sides, and these biases are reflected in the colour and texture of any given history of Northern Ireland, including my own. Therefore, similar to the theology of reconciliation, the history of Northern Ireland is based on the individual re-telling and re-shaping by any given author.

Despite the lack of a completely unbiased history of Northern Ireland, an understanding of the country's torrid past is necessary for this research. In order to study how context influences the theology of reconciliation there must be an understanding of the context and its particularities. On a national level, it is necessary to understand the complex relationships that the two groups, Catholics and Protestants, have in Northern Ireland. The division between the two dates back to the earliest foreign invasions of Ireland. Throughout their history, the two

⁴⁶⁸ John Whyte quoted in Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles*, 65.

⁴⁶⁹ Stefan Wolff, "The Peace Process since 1998," in *Peace at Last?: The Impact of the Good Friday Agreement on Northern Ireland*, ed. Jörg Neuheiser and Stefan Wolff. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 205-32.

groups have found increasing ways to separate themselves from one another through religion, culture, and nationality. History has offered the two sections of Northern Ireland images, martyrs, and yearly celebrations which serve as a means to further separate themselves from “the other.” In viewing their respective histories neither group acknowledges themselves as oppressor. Likewise, both feel that they are rightfully occupying their current area. This idea of rightful occupation stems from the historical background of both societies, Catholic and Protestant, Republican and Loyalist, who simultaneously saw themselves as inherently different and yet equally steadfast in their desire to maintain their respective ways of life. Placing this feud firmly in a historical setting, where neither sees themselves as committing wrong and neither wishes the other to occupy their respective space, makes reconciliation a difficult task at best. With each seemingly satisfied to exist in their own sphere of understanding, reconciliation becomes an arduous undertaking that is sometimes seen as unnecessary if violence remains at a low level and a functioning government exists. This view on reconciliation at the local level is further hindered by the way that the government has used the word to ignore aspects of truth and justice and force the two communities together.

Among those who are not satisfied with a passive segregation are the victims and the families of victims who were injured or killed in the Troubles. In a recent article in the *Belfast Telegraph*, groups of victims came together to tell their stories, and express their indignation at the lack of “truth and justice”⁴⁷⁰ that they had received in the midst of the peace process. These victims, who have largely been ignored in the greater political reshaping of the region, remain the silent majority in Northern Ireland.

Accordingly, along with the history on a national level, the history of Northern Ireland

⁴⁷⁰ Jeffrey Donaldson quoted in Claire McNeilly “Can Northern Ireland Ever Agree on How to Address the Troubles?” *Belfast Telegraph*, 20 July 2010, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local/national/can-northern-ireland-ever-agree-on-how-to-address-the-troubles-14880956.html> [accessed 20 July 2010].

for individuals on a local level is a vital, and oftentimes neglected, area of study. Therefore, to best understand this research's case studies of reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland it is important to understand the context into which they were created on a local level. Likewise, to understand those who are working within these communities, there is a need to explore the individual contexts that cultivated their respective desire to work in reconciliation.

As David Stevens, leader of the Corrymeela Community described, those who are working in reconciliation are the exceptions in Northern Ireland.⁴⁷¹ These communities are living as an exception in a place where violence is the norm and the concept of reconciliation, as a result of historic failures in bringing the two groups together, has seemingly lost its meaning. With a general history in place, there is a need to dig deeper into the local community in Northern Ireland, and to understand what initiatives, specifically within reconciliation communities, have been created in order to maintain peace and encourage freedom in this area. This local history will be addressed in the case studies in the following chapters.

⁴⁷¹ Stevens, Interview by Author, 52-3.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY

Introduction

The predominate thing in church congregations, Protestant ones, was to condemn violence, support the security forces, and carry on with business as usual. Anybody who was outside that was an exception. Why those people are exceptions is the thing to explore. And it usually is something in their background or through some experience they have had that pushes them in another direction. So we are in the world of exceptions here, whether it's Northern Ireland or anywhere, there is something that makes some people exceptions.⁴⁷²

Protestant and Catholic churches in Northern Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s were, according to Liverpool University lecturer Maria Power, “embroiled in discussion concerning theological issues with the occasional glance towards the idea of community relations.”⁴⁷³ Each denomination's main priority during this time, it seemed, was to define itself theologically as a unique and superior entity against the other. This focus on division at a corporate level led many at a congregational level to search for a different type of theological understanding that involved finding connections between Catholics and Protestants. The move towards understanding across the divide was not always popular within the everyday local church, and thus mostly occurred outside the established congregational setting.⁴⁷⁴ These grassroots attempts at cross-community work led to what is known as the ecumenical movement in Ireland. Because of a lack of interest within the church to attempt cross-community endeavours,

⁴⁷² David Stevens, Interview by Author, 52-3.

⁴⁷³ Maria Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations: Inter-Church Relationships in Northern Ireland 1980-2005* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 118-9.

⁴⁷⁴ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 118-9.

one of the biggest constituencies backing the movement was found within the universities in Northern Ireland. Recalling attitudes among students during his time as a chaplain at Queen's University in Belfast (QUB), Ray Davey, founder of the Corrymeela Community said: "My pre-war generation had spent much time in debate, discussion and study groups. This new generation wanted to move beyond that to action and change."⁴⁷⁵

The first reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland or, as Power calls them, the "Early Pioneers," evolved from this social context. The first of these "Early Pioneers" was the Corrymeela Community, founded in 1965 in Ballycastle, County Antrim. The Corrymeela Community is the first case study that will be examined in this research project. It offers insights into not only the first Community of its kind in Northern Ireland, but also the largest and most well-known. It is an important place to examine the theology of reconciliation in Northern Ireland, as the Community has members, workers, and volunteers who attest to the importance of reconciliation on a local and global scale. Studying Corrymeela is also beneficial from a sociological perspective because of its continued existence throughout the most turbulent time period in the history of Northern Ireland; it exemplifies the difficulties of adjusting one's vision to an ever-changing social context.

The goal of the following sections is to create a comprehensive account of the Corrymeela Community, as told by members, volunteers, leaders, and Community publications, in order to better place its presence within the current study on the theology of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. This summary will include a history of Corrymeela, indicating key points in the history of Northern Ireland when the social context influenced the development of the Community both structurally and theologically. The final sections will include the personal histories and theological beliefs of certain Community members and staff in order to document

⁴⁷⁵ Ray Davey, *A Channel of Peace* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1993), 64.

Corrymeela's current mindset. The same approach of examining key historical and theological developments in the individuals' lives will be applied, with a special emphasis on the unique aspects of living in Northern Ireland.

The Corrymeela Community Corporate History

The Inspiration for the Corrymeela Community

To begin a history of Corrymeela, or ecumenical communities in Northern Ireland in general, it is impossible not to start with the vision of founder Ray Davey. Davey's leadership of Corrymeela during difficult times serves as a continued inspiration for the Community, despite his stepping down as leader in 1980. Upon reading about Davey's life as chronicled by various authors, including Davey himself, there are various stories that seemingly could explain his inspiration for Corrymeela. John Morrow, Davey's successor as leader of Corrymeela, spoke of three key elements he believes led to creation of the Community: Davey's wartime experience;⁴⁷⁶ the founder of the Agape Community in Italy, Tullio Vinay; and the Iona Community of Scotland.⁴⁷⁷ Each element inspired Davey as he felt called to create an alternative method of Christian community in Northern Ireland, and each remains important to

⁴⁷⁶ John Morrow, the leader of Corrymeela after Davey, expounds on this subject: "He [Davey] had a sense that the experience of people living and working together could be a theatre in which things could happen. He had seen it in the prisoner-of-war camps, and he had the belief in community and how lives could be changed." John Morrow quoted in Alf McCreary, *In War and Peace* (Belfast: Brehon Press, 2007), 78.

⁴⁷⁷ John Morrow, *Journey of Hope: Sources of the Corrymeela Vision* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1995), 6-9. Along with literature published about the Community, several of those who were interviewed confirmed this idea. David Stevens, leader of Corrymeela stated: "A lot of important impulses came from outside Northern Ireland, like Davey's experience in Dresden and people's encounters with Taize, Agape and Iona and so on." David Stevens, Interview by Author, 54. Yvonne Naylor, former volunteer and school's worker for the Community, agreed: "I mean, the vision [of Corrymeela] came from Ray Davey, of course, and his experiences of community in the camps during the war." Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 24, 39.

Corrymeela today. The following sections offer insight into the ways in which these three elements moulded the Community and also how other leaders within the Community interpreted Davey's original vision.

Davey was born in 1915 in the small village of Dunmurry, located in the southern part of Belfast. His father was a Presbyterian minister, and much of Davey's beliefs were influenced by his teachings. Davey described his father's theology as "a clear theology emphasising the grace and love of God in Christ, the need for forgiveness and acceptance of the gift of the Spirit for a new life and the need of following this through in everyday living."⁴⁷⁸ His father was a hands-on minister, preaching in the days before the Welfare State, and Davey remembered the great lengths he would take in order to visit the sick or dying in his congregation:

With no Social Security and rampant unemployment, life was hard. TB was common and even as a child I was aware of malnutrition and poverty. Yet in spite of all, there was much that was not only commendable but at times inspiring. There was a real sense of identity and community expressed in the on-going social, sporting and religious activities. People did matter. Generosity and mutual support were part of life.⁴⁷⁹

Davey's mother also influenced her son. "I don't think she ever thought in modern sectarian terms ... We were grounded in the fundamentals of our own tradition, but always taught to respect and try to understand others different from us."⁴⁸⁰

In 1937, upon completing his degree at QUB, Davey began studying for his master's degree at the Presbyterian Theological College in Belfast and also serving in his first parish ministry position. The day the Prime Minister told the nation that Great Britain was at war with

⁴⁷⁸ Ray Davey, *Take Away This Hate: The Story of a Search for Community* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1985), 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Ray Davey, *The Pollen of Peace* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1991), 77.

⁴⁸⁰ Davey, *Take Away This Hate*, 12.

Germany was the same day that Davey conducted his first service at the First Bangor Presbyterian Church and, as he remembered, the morning service's atmosphere was anxious and tense. For most of those in the congregation, Davey recalled, the memories from World War I were not far enough in the past, and the idea of reliving such a war again was terrifying.⁴⁸¹

By 1940, although deeply against the idea of war, Davey realised that his services might be better used abroad. He volunteered for a position with the YMCA, and on 27 September 1940 he was sent to Egypt for service in their Middle East Division. Working with the YMCA was rewarding for Davey, as he learned the rewards and complications of living life in a diverse, close-knit community. He said that the YMCA “enabled men of all denominations to come together in an atmosphere of community.”⁴⁸²

Davey enjoyed his work with the YMCA. He recalled that it was “the prototype of a meaningful Christian community. It was located right at the place where things were happening and not on the fringe; a meeting place for all sorts of people and groups.”⁴⁸³ His work with the YMCA was cut short, however, when he was captured in June 1942 by the German forces at Tobruk in North Africa. He was transferred to Italy and then to Germany as a prisoner of war. Feeling the loss of his previous community and the strains of being a prisoner, Davey established small groups among the POWs as a means by which the troops could speak about their lives and experiences.

During this time, Davey remained largely on the outside of the battles of World War II; upon his transfer to Germany, however, he witnessed the aftermath of the attack on Dresden. In his book *The War Diaries*,⁴⁸⁴ Davey recalls walking around the city after its destruction: “I’ve

⁴⁸¹ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 21-4.

⁴⁸² Ray Davey quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 16.

⁴⁸³ Davey, *Take Away This Hate*, 44.

⁴⁸⁴ Ray Davey, *The War Diaries* (Belfast: The Brehon Press, 2005).

never seen such absolute devastation on such a wide scale. Nothing but the casing of the houses remains, charred walls, even the trees are battered. It was a terrible fact to realise that many thousands of bodies were still entombed under the debris. I did realise then what total war means.”⁴⁸⁵ This event stayed with Davey, even after his release from prison and his return to Northern Ireland. He observed later that “in all its [Dresden’s] horror and suffering [it] once again highlighted for me the tragedy of broken relationships between the nations, the lack of real community between people and the price that was and is being paid, because we cannot live together as a genuine family and a true community.”⁴⁸⁶

With the conclusion of the war, Davey was ordained in the Presbyterian Church and married his long-term girlfriend Kathleen Burrows. In 1946, he was offered the position of Presbyterian chaplain at QUB. It was then that Davey discovered that the university was far different than it had been before the war. Catholic and Protestant students were starting to attend together at a higher rate than ever before. By 1945 it was estimated that over 2,226 Catholic students were registered at QUB.⁴⁸⁷ While from a social standpoint this was progressive, from the University’s view it was an economical problem. Because of the increasing student population there was a lack of space for classrooms, and buildings for clubs and chaplaincies were not a high priority. This included the Presbyterian chaplaincy, which, under Davey’s leadership, had proved successful in gathering students to engage in exchanges concerning politics, spirituality, and university life. Despite the popularity of this group, the meetings were infrequent. The Davey’s decided they needed their own meeting space, and eventually received a grant to purchase “Number 7” at 7 College Park East for their proceedings. The students helped prepare the new building, and it was in their physical labour

⁴⁸⁵ Davey, *The War Diaries*, 206.

⁴⁸⁶ Davey, *Take Away This Hate*, 70.

⁴⁸⁷ Davey, *Take Away This Hate*, 73.

that Davey noticed a sense of community emerging. “The students felt accepted as they were and at their own level,” he later wrote. “We did all we could to help them to see that the Christian faith was not a limiting departmental activity for a few spiritually-minded, but rather a way of living that embraced all their activities.”⁴⁸⁸

It was during his time as chaplain that Davey began reading the writings of George McLeod, a Church of Scotland minister and founder of the Iona Community in Scotland. McLeod’s theology was shaped by the ancient Celtic church tradition of incorporating one’s faith into every aspect of life. With this basic tenant, McLeod inspired a group of Christians from various backgrounds to rebuild an abbey on the island of Iona. Those who came together to work on the abbey simultaneously shared their views on life, faith, and politics,⁴⁸⁹ and this idea of holistic faith materialised itself into the Iona Community. Iona was created as an ecumenical community that chose to establish itself as an independent body outside the local church system. Morrow, who before coming to Corrymeela had lead Iona youth camps, described the theology of Iona:

The robust image of Christ at the heart of this cut through some of the sentimentality of my childhood. It was a life-affirming creed focused on the ‘wholeness’ as the dominant image for salvation. The weekly healing service sought to recover the intimate connection between the body and spirit and between the healing of the individual and the healing of the Community.⁴⁹⁰

Davey had heard McLeod speak on several occasions, but it was his book *We Shall Rebuild*⁴⁹¹ that confirmed ideas he himself had been working through after his return from the war. In this

⁴⁸⁸ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 62.

⁴⁸⁹ The Corrymeela work camps seemed to follow this model of building community through common projects.

⁴⁹⁰ John Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation: A Brief Memoir* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2003), 24.

⁴⁹¹ George MacLeod, *We Shall Rebuild: The Work of the Iona Community on Mainland and on the Island* (Iona: Iona Community, not dated).

book, McLeod emphasises two main points: that the Bible attests to the importance of community and that the Incarnation, the idea that Jesus lived amongst humanity, is central to understanding the Christian faith.⁴⁹² “These two insights provided me with an agenda not only for my personal faith, but also for work in the university,” Davey wrote. “I had, through the war years, gained a fuller experience of the reality and presence of the Spirit of Christ and the urge to look beyond myself to other people and their needs.”⁴⁹³

Davey wanted to instil the idea of looking beyond oneself to the students with whom he worked at QUB. Each summer, therefore, Davey led a group of students on an international trip that he hoped would broaden their perspective beyond Northern Ireland. This trip often involved interacting with various religious communities around the world, such as Taizé in France, Agape in Italy, and Iona in Scotland. One particularly influential trip for the students was to the Agape Community in 1954, where they met with founder Tullio Vinay. Vinay was inspired to create a Christian community out of his experience helping Jewish families escape Nazi-occupied Florence in World War II. The Agape Community was forged from several summers of work camps, undertaken by people from all over the world. Ray Davey explains Vinay’s theology: “His theology is centred in Christology: the Christ who is Lord and at the same time servant.”⁴⁹⁴ Vinay was deeply critical of the church for its message of love, yet seeming disregard for those most in need. He felt that in order to bring the message of Christ’s love, service, and reconciliation to the masses, there had to be a better understanding of the local context.⁴⁹⁵ “Love,” Vinay states, “can never be theoretical.”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹² MacLeod, *We Shall Rebuild*, 18.

⁴⁹³ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 63.

⁴⁹⁴ Ray Davey quoted in Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 104.

⁴⁹⁵ Ray Davey quoted in Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 102-3.

⁴⁹⁶ Tullio Vinay quoted in Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 103.

Davey was impressed with the work of Agape, and it was there that his thoughts turned again to the idea of an ecumenical Christian community in Northern Ireland. This burgeoning idea cemented itself in Davey's mind after the group met with theologian Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland, shortly after leaving Agape. As the session appeared to be winding down, one student asked the question: "What can we do for world peace?" Barth answered: "Go home and set your own house in order." Davey and his students were inspired by these words and what they meant for a turbulent Northern Ireland.⁴⁹⁷

Corrymeela Beginnings

That trip set in motion the inspiration for what was to be the Corrymeela⁴⁹⁸ Community. In the summer of 1964, Davey met with John Morrow and Alex Watson, both former members of the Iona Community, and asked if they would be interested in starting a reconciliation community in Northern Ireland. They said yes, and the three decided that their next move should be to invite anybody who might be interested to attend a series of meetings in order to discuss the possibilities. At the first meeting fifty people, all of whom were Christians from a variety of backgrounds, showed up. The group was enthusiastic about the idea of an ecumenical Christian community. They all hoped they could create, as Davey remembered, "a new community which could counter apathy and complacency and open up new possibilities."⁴⁹⁹ As the group continued to meet to exchange ideas and pray for the best way forward, an opportunity arose in the early months of 1965 when a holiday property went up for sale in

⁴⁹⁷ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 68-9.

⁴⁹⁸ Though not italicised for readability purposes, Corrymeela is an Irish word that has been translated to mean "a place of refuge."

⁴⁹⁹ Ray Davey, "Beginnings," *Corrymeela Magazine*, December 2005, 9.

Ballycastle, County Antrim. Davey immediately knew that this property was the concrete element needed for the ecumenical community to become a reality. Upon approval by the planning group (yet despite the group's lack of funds), he made an offer. Several weeks passed with no answer, and Davey finally met with the agency and pleaded with them to accept. They eventually did.

Davey's dream was beginning to materialise, but even with the purchase of the property there was still work to do. The first challenge that lay before the Community was managing the new property; the buildings on site needed refurbishing and the property needed to be maintained. Davey assembled a group of lay volunteers in the summers of 1965 and 1966 to complete the work in a series of camps at the centre. Morrow said of these work camps: "Our early relationships were forged in the work camps at Ballycastle and the close integration of work and worship, faith and life."⁵⁰⁰

From the beginning it was clear that the way the Community was organised was important, and the founding group looked to other Christian communities for inspiration. Eventually they decided that Corrymeela needed a head council composed of elected members that would oversee the Community and its dealings. Part of the role of this council would also be the election of a leader, and the maintaining of volunteers to keep the site running. This council was established entirely on a voluntary basis, and the overwhelming agreement was that Davey, as founder, should serve as the first leader of the Community. Volunteers at this stage consisted mostly of Community members and students from QUB and were, as Davey described them, "necessary for our survival, as we did not have the money to employ professional labour at this early stage."⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰⁰ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 15.

⁵⁰¹ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 78.

Another key issue concerning organisation was, despite Corrymeela's aim to be ecumenical, the debate over whether or not the Community would be defined as Protestant. Some members believed that there should be a theological basis for the work that was being done in Corrymeela's name; others did not. As Ronald Wells, a professor of history stated: "It is not that these people were rigid or conservative, but that they wanted to state their intentions clearly."⁵⁰² It was finally decided that the requirement for membership would be a confession of faith in God as revealed in Jesus and the work of Holy Spirit in the world. Wells added: "Theology, as such, would be developed as the Community dealt with specific problems and situations."⁵⁰³ Duncan Morrow, historian and son of John Morrow, said that this lack of definition within the Community was key to the success of Corrymeela during the Troubles: "[It is] clear that if Corrymeela had defined its purposes in terms of 'key performance indicators' or 'targets' then they would have been a catastrophic distraction in 1969-85."⁵⁰⁴

The first Corrymeela event took place in June 1965, and involved forty to fifty people who came together to commit themselves to the work of peace. This meeting lacked any press coverage and, as volunteers who were present recall, there were hardly enough chairs to go around. Nevertheless, it marked the start of the Community's public declaration of hope for an ecumenical Northern Ireland. It was decided that after this first trial event an official opening should take place on 30 October 1965. On this date, with members, volunteers, friends, and supporters gathered at the centre, Corrymeela's work officially began. Davey recalled this day as being "happy and relaxed,"⁵⁰⁵ with a speech by Tullio Vinay from the Agape Community serving as the centrepiece. Vinay's speech was divided into four hopes for Corrymeela. The first

⁵⁰² Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 76-7.

⁵⁰³ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 77.

⁵⁰⁴ Duncan Morrow quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 246.

⁵⁰⁵ Davey, "Beginnings," 10.

hope encouraged the Community to show humanity the message of the “New World” that Christ attested to in his teachings. This involved living a genuine faith, through which the words and actions of Jesus were readily seen in the words and actions of the individuals of the Community. The second hope was that the centre would be open to both believers and unbelievers. Vinay believed that the unbelievers would challenge the believers and that the believers had a message to bring to the unbelievers. Third, as McLeod also attested, the Community should hope to be an example to the local churches, and should work to free itself from the constraints of simply having a desire for survival. Finally, Vinay said that the Community must never grow content in its work, but always search for what was most needed locally. According to Vinay, the Lord would pass by to show Corrymeela the way, and it was the Community’s choice as to whether it would follow or stay put.⁵⁰⁶ Vinay concluded: “Every opportunity is given to us as His instruments.”⁵⁰⁷ Davey summarised Vinay’s speech that day:

He said that with the help of the living Lord, the centre would be a place proclaiming the New World of Jesus Christ, and that it would be a meeting-place for all [people], both believers and non-believers: also that it would be a question mark to the churches everywhere, that they revise their structures and be freed from the instinct of self-preservation, in order to perform their function to the world.⁵⁰⁸

Davey confirmed this desire for the Community, and declared it an “open village”⁵⁰⁹ for any person willing to learn more about the “other.” He continued on this idea of openness by explaining its importance to Corrymeela’s vision: “[Corrymeela is] open also for all sorts of new ventures and experiments in fellowship, study and worship. Open to all sorts of people;

⁵⁰⁶ Tullio Vinay quoted in Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 104.

⁵⁰⁷ Tullio Vinay quoted in Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 104.

⁵⁰⁸ Davey, *Take Away This Hate*, 93.

⁵⁰⁹ Davey, “Beginnings,” 11.

from industry, the professions, agriculture and commerce. This is part of our vision. We know we are only at the beginning and there is so much to be done.”⁵¹⁰ Morrow recalled that in the founding years of Corrymeela there was not the intense emphasis on reconciliation that one finds in the Community today. Instead, the goal of the Community was, at this point, “about the renewal of the church, the nature of Christian community, the vocation of lay people in the world and the wider issues of world peace and social change.”⁵¹¹

One particular conference shortly after Corrymeela’s opening put the Community in the media spotlight. Easter of 1966 symbolised the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Community had to choose how it would react to the event publicly. The Easter Rising directly led to the partition of Northern Ireland and the creation of the Irish Republic, and its celebrations were always marked with violence from both sides of the divide. The Community decided that the most ecumenical way of dealing with the occasion would be an open conference marking the anniversary, thus demonstrating Corrymeela’s commitment to peaceful means of celebrating historical holidays. The conference was called “Community 1966,” and the keynote speaker was the then-Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O’Neill. O’Neill encouraged the work of Corrymeela and challenged both Catholics and Protestants whose intent it was to keep the two communities separated. The major point in his speech was that “if we cannot be united in all things, let us at least be united in working together in Christian spirit – to create better opportunities for our children, whether they come from the Falls Road or from Finaghy.”⁵¹² His presence at the conference created a stir in the local news, and most of the major newspapers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland covered the story positively. “Looking back, we were certainly idealistic and visionary, though we never claimed that we

⁵¹⁰ Davey, *A Channel of Peace*, 77.

⁵¹¹ Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 72.

⁵¹² Terence O’Neill quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 32.

would solve the Irish problem, or bring back peace,” Davey wrote in his “Leader’s report” for that year. “We saw our function rather to begin the process of reconciliation; point out the way.”⁵¹³

Corrymeela During the Troubles

The “Community 1966” conference transformed Corrymeela into an officially recognised cross-community venture in Northern Ireland, despite this not being the primary focus of the Community. For although Corrymeela’s members were aware of the issues between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, it was not their aim to focus exclusively on that divide. As the fighting between the two communities increased in the late 1960s, however, it became apparent that any ideas of international programmes would have to be set aside for local ones.

Although the official beginning of the Troubles is unclear, it seems to coincide with the unravelling of the O’Neill administration in December 1968. Following a three-day battle in the Bogside area of Derry in August 1969, Irish Prime Minister Jack Lynch implored the British government to aid in restoring order to Northern Ireland. On 15 August, Westminster decided to send troops to aid police in quelling the increasing violence. Corrymeela was only four years old at the time of this chaos, and was ill-equipped to handle such events. It joined other groups that existed at the time in evacuating children out of the worst-hit areas. This initiative lasted for two weeks, during which some 300 children were taken to Ballycastle. This situation became increasingly difficult due to lack of housing, and outside resources had to be found for those

⁵¹³ Ray Davey quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 35.

who had been taken away from their homes. Yvonne Naylor, a volunteer at Corrymeela in the 1970s, said:

I know in the early 1970s Corrymeela started bringing families out of areas like Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy, so that they didn't get involved [in the fighting]. Teenagers who were vulnerable were being brought out of the estates and there were so many people at Corrymeela they couldn't put them all up, and so several local Ballycastle schools let us use their classrooms and-or provided mattresses and bedding.⁵¹⁴

Alf McCreary, a journalist for the *Belfast Telegraph*, recalled, "Corrymeela had no preparation, or training, for such an emergency. The Community's volunteers did the best they could in almost impossibly difficult decisions. There was once again the theology of practicality, in bringing help and comfort to those in urgent need."⁵¹⁵

The 1970s was a grim time for Northern Ireland, as the decade brought with it the worst violence in the country's history. Throughout this time, Corrymeela continued to reach out to people in need, with the majority of its volunteers' time spent bringing people out of the areas worst hit by violence and temporarily relocating them to Ballycastle. Once at the centre, short-term volunteers ran family weeks and work camps for youth, while long-term volunteers did household and administrative activities such as cooking, cleaning, reception, and worship.⁵¹⁶

By 1973, it had become apparent that Corrymeela needed to expand the Ballycastle centre in order to maintain its level of activity. Through the use of volunteer-led work camps, Corrymeela was able to expand its physical site to include the Tara Village of chalets. With this increased capacity for visitors came more responsibility for volunteers, and it was thereby decided that a centre director was needed to oversee the work at Ballycastle. This new director

⁵¹⁴ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 40.

⁵¹⁵ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 43.

⁵¹⁶ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 43.

was Harold Good, a Methodist minister, who accepted the position in 1973.⁵¹⁷ Leadership in such a situation was difficult, as it represented change to a Community that was highly invested in its work. Good explained: “I think that I helped bring structure to the place, and that wasn’t easy. This was a topsy-turvy organisation which had just ‘grewed and grewed.’ I felt like it was a challenge to give direction to something which at times seemed all over the place.”⁵¹⁸

This growth in participation at the centre was mirrored by a growth in membership in the Community. It was decided, therefore, that local cell groups should be created in order to keep those who were a part of the larger, non-local community up to date with the work at the centre. These groups also provided support for Corrymeela members and acted as inspiration for local community work.⁵¹⁹ On a wider scale, the Corrymeela Link was created in Reading, England, in 1975. Its two main objectives were to “encourage spiritual support for the Community and provide an educational programme.”⁵²⁰ In the same realm, the Corrymeela Friends was created for members of the dispersed Community who were unable to commit to the requirements of membership but still wanted to help financially.⁵²¹

Another change in the Community during the Troubles was a more clearly defined vision. Davey’s vision was the creation of an “open village,” in the name of peace, for people of all countries and situations. With the increase in local violence, people began to question the stance of Corrymeela on political, social, and theological issues. The idea, therefore, of reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants on a local level was incorporated into the Community via a public statement that read: “[Corrymeela] had become a place for people of

⁵¹⁷ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 49.

⁵¹⁸ Harold Good quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 50-1.

⁵¹⁹ William Rutherford, “Cell Groups,” in *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986*, ed. Ray Davey (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 34-5.

⁵²⁰ John Martin, “The Corrymeela Link Reading,” in *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986*, ed. Ray Davey (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 209.

⁵²¹ Kathleen Davey, “The Friends of Corrymeela”, in *An Unfinished Journey : An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986*, ed. Ray Davey (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 38.

all ages and Christian traditions who, individually and together, are committed to the healing of social and religious and political divisions that exist in Northern Ireland and throughout the world.”⁵²² This vision showed a more acute understanding of the denominational issues in Northern Ireland, as it included “all ages and all Christian traditions.”

Despite the avoidance of theology, as such, those in the Community had always been asked to maintain their membership in their local churches as well as with Corrymeela. The purpose of this was the hope that an ongoing connection to the local church would lead people from every section of life to the open nature of the Ballycastle centre and, in turn, that Corrymeela might influence the local churches in their work.⁵²³ Good, commented on the importance of this continued connection of Corrymeela to the church. He stated that Corrymeela has a great deal to offer the church, despite its hesitance to be connected to the Community. Corrymeela, according to Good, “must continue to be a sign that reconciliation is not an optional extra to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that the ministry of reconciliation must be given visible expression.”⁵²⁴ Good went on to say that Corrymeela must “covet that openness which is to many the hallmark of the Community,”⁵²⁵ but to not lose sight of the importance of theology.⁵²⁶ Theology for the Community, according to Good, “must be forged out of the Corrymeela experience.”⁵²⁷

While Northern Ireland in the 1980s saw a decrease in violence, the violent acts themselves became more publicised. This was no better demonstrated than by the hunger strikes of Republican prisoners being held in the Maze prison. Controversy surrounded the strikes, as

⁵²² Colin Fowler quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 121-2.

⁵²³ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 59.

⁵²⁴ Harold Good, “Corrymeela and the Churches,” in *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986*, ed. Ray Davey (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 220.

⁵²⁵ Good, “Corrymeela and the Churches,” 221.

⁵²⁶ This seems to suggest that those at the Community saw theology, as discussed in the churches of Northern Ireland, to be in opposition to openness.

⁵²⁷ Good, “Corrymeela and the Churches,” 221.

people from both communities were forced to choose sides in the conflict over prisoners' rights.⁵²⁸ This controversy did not elude Corrymeela members, who found themselves split on the issue. Morrow recalled in his memoir how these situations of contention were handled at the time: "We had to learn, in sometimes painful ways, to hear each other, without trying to convince each other that 'we were right.' We learnt that part of reconciliation involves living and accepting unresolved issues at times, as well as honesty and openness."⁵²⁹

In the context of this increasingly divided society, the Corrymeela Community continued to evaluate its own position. Ray Davey's time as leader was nearing a close, and it became clear that the Community would need to choose a replacement. This replacement was John Morrow, who had been involved with Corrymeela since its conception. To follow Davey as a leader was no easy task, and the challenges of maintaining a Community whose members were so deeply vested in their work quickly became apparent to Morrow. For example, he had difficulty adjusting the Community to the idea of paid staff at the Ballycastle centre. "The members believed that they were the founding group who kept it going when there was no staff, and that this was virtually their home," he said. "Staff, on the other hand, were working seven days a week at the Centre and they felt that some members believed that they [members] owned the place."⁵³⁰

Along with a new leader, the Community also changed the means of programme work at the Ballycastle centre. According to Maria Power, in the 1980s Corrymeela adopted "an experiential model, which encourages participants to form ideas concerning their own prejudices and life experiences whilst building trusting, open relationships with the others in the

⁵²⁸ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 115.

⁵²⁹ Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 59.

⁵³⁰ John Morrow quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 90.

group.”⁵³¹ Four new foci were developed: family, community, youth, and schools work.⁵³²

These groups were brought together in a series of different fashions: personal and group education, small group model, conference model, organisational model (in which the centre and staff were made available for groups to run their own programmes), the seed group model (in which groups of Catholic and Protestants agreed to attend for a six month period each weekend at Ballycastle),⁵³³ and the festival model.⁵³⁴ Morrow found inspiration for many of these structural changes in the Dutch Northern Irish Committee. He and Derek Wilson, then centre director at Ballycastle, visited several Dutch Christian Adult Education Centres in January 1980. It was in Holland that they met Roel Kaptein, a Dutch theologian who worked extensively with the Corrymeela Community in its understanding of René Girard and his ideas concerning societal scapegoating.⁵³⁵

As well as new models for work at the centre, there were also several building projects and additions to the physical Corrymeela sites that were added in the 1980s. One example was a house donated by a Scottish Quaker couple, Peter and Valerie Tennant. Knocklayd, as it was called, was located close to the Ballycastle centre and became known as a place that focused primarily on residential concerns concerning the spiritual elements of faith.⁵³⁶ Along with the addition of Knocklayd, the mid-eighties brought the creation of the *Croi*⁵³⁷ building at the Ballycastle centre. The *Croi* was brought about through donations from two churches in London – one

⁵³¹ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 125.

⁵³² Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 125.

⁵³³ Derek Wilson, “Range of Models,” in *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986*, ed. Ray Davey (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 159-60.

⁵³⁴ Perhaps the best example of the festival model was Summerfest, which began in 1981 and was modelled after the German *Kirchentag* gathering. One of the most famous visitors to Corrymeela was Mother Teresa, who agreed to speak at the 1981 Summerfest.

⁵³⁵ Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 54-6.

⁵³⁶ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 195.

⁵³⁷ The Irish word for heart.

Catholic and the other Protestant.⁵³⁸ David Stevens, Chairman of the Council at the time of its creation, spoke of the *Croi* shortly after its completion:

It [the *Croi*] has indeed become the heart of the whole place. It is the meeting place where all the groups in residence at particular times come together, sometimes to pray, or to celebrate, or to discuss and debate. In a very real way it helps to unite all the different groups and people who are there and it sets the tone and spirit for daily activities.⁵³⁹

By the mid 1980s, the “Number 8” house in Belfast, named after its location at 8 Upper Crescent, was becoming an increasingly important resource for those associated with the Ballycastle centre. Not only did it hold the offices of the leader and a few administrative staff; it was also the “finger on the pulse” of the Community, and sought out means through which Corrymeela might be of greater service to the local communities of Northern Ireland. As Morrow put it: “Only as we understand and relate to what ordinary people are thinking and doing, can we discover the role which we need to play, to be a resource to all who share our commitment to reconciliation.”⁵⁴⁰

It was during this period of leadership that Morrow noticed, much to his dismay, that although the programmes at the Ballycastle centre were successful, there was an increasing demand on the staff and volunteers at the centre. This pressure not only affected their spiritual lives, but also the way in which they interacted with one another. Morrow explained:

⁵³⁸ Audrey Constant, *The Way of Peace: The Story of the Corrymeela Community* (Norfolk: Religious and Moral Education Press, 1993), 20-1.

⁵³⁹ David Stevens, “Corrymeela Centre-Ballycastle,” in *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 32.

⁵⁴⁰ John Morrow, “Corrymeela House Belfast,” in Ray Davey, *An Unfinished Journey: An Anniversary Anthology of The Corrymeela Community 1965-1986* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1986), 31.

Faced with an increased pressures brought about by having to live and work together closely and to meet with so many practical, pastoral and social demands from the visiting groups and individuals, our staff and volunteers were often exhausted and frustrated. The daily worship was often focused more on the needs of the visiting groups and did not feed us for our own community life.⁵⁴¹

In his book *Journey of Hope*,⁵⁴² Morrow describes the works of several theologians and ministers, and how they helped him and the Community during this difficult time at the centre. The work of Jean Vanier, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and René Girard (as explained to the Community by the Dutch minister Roel Kaptein) were especially influential. Jean Vanier was a well-known French Canadian with a Catholic background who worked extensively with mentally impaired individuals in a Community known as L'Arche. L'Arche was deeply rooted in the idea of authentic community that defied any type of superficial interactions among those living together.⁵⁴³

These ideas on community were no sooner tested than with the arrival of a new centre director in 1985, Michael Earle. Originally from London, Earle was a student at QUB and had participated in Corrymeela's work camps in 1969. He was, however, an outsider, in that he was originally from England and had been living in New Zealand for ten years. He described his time as director: "It was like being at the mountaintop and in the valley on the same day, or even at the same moment. But that was part of the reality of living in a Christian community of reconciliation."⁵⁴⁴ Despite these difficulties, Earle worked alongside Morrow faithfully for five years, and he described his time at Corrymeela as "the best time of my life, even though it was the hardest time of my career."⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 49.

⁵⁴² John Morrow, *Journey of Hope: Sources of the Corrymeela Vision* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Press, 1995).

⁵⁴³ Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 54-5.

⁵⁴⁴ Michael Earle quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 112-3.

⁵⁴⁵ Michael Earle quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 113.

By Earle's arrival in 1985, there was yet another change in the corporate vision of Corrymeela. It held to all that had been previously stated, simply redefining the Community's role in the greater local context. The revised vision stated that Corrymeela would,

be a sign and symbol in a divided society that Protestant and Catholic can share together in a common witness to Christ, who transcends our divisions and leads us towards a larger vision of reconciliation; to be a question mark to the existing structures of our churches in Ireland; provide opportunities for people from all sections of our society for dialogue and encounter and learning in order to dispel ignorance, prejudice and fear and to develop new relationships of mutual respect, trust and co-operation.⁵⁴⁶

This vision of reconciliation involved the idea of witness and the hope that, through its unity, the Community could serve as an example to Northern Ireland and the world. As former leader Trevor Williams put it: "What we were trying to do was something more fundamental than oppose violence. What we were trying to do was to find out what it means to live the lifestyle of Jesus in his footsteps. What does it mean in Northern Ireland today in the context that we live in?"⁵⁴⁷

By the 1990s, Corrymeela was learning from new trends in reconciliation work, and decided that it needed to expand its programmes to communities in the Belfast area. Along with the added programmes in contentious areas of Belfast, there were also new developments at the Ballycastle site such as single-identity groups, cross-border work, and local inter-church contact.⁵⁴⁸ With the growing complexity of the work of Corrymeela and the increased dependency on public funding, there required a more structured means of organisation.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ John Morrow quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 122.

⁵⁴⁷ Trevor Williams quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 123.

⁵⁴⁸ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 126-7.

⁵⁴⁹ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 130-1.

This organisational role was taken over by new centre director Colin Craig in 1990 and new leader Trevor Williams in 1993. Craig's first encounter with Corrymeela was through a community relations conference that was sponsored by his Belfast-based school. He continued to serve as a volunteer through some of the worst times of the Troubles.⁵⁵⁰ Williams, a Dublin native, came into contact with Corrymeela while serving as the Church of Ireland chaplain alongside John Morrow at QUB. Williams was well known for his work at QUB and as a presenter on the BBC Northern Ireland show, *Sunday Sequence*.⁵⁵¹ The Community placed his name in the running for the new director of Corrymeela, and he was consequently offered the job.⁵⁵²

Corrymeela During the Peace Process

The political process of the mid 1990s again caused the Community to re-evaluate its views as a group. A post-Troubles reality had emerged, and it involved a local context filled with a large number of victims of violence. In this more peaceful society there was also an increase in emigrant populations in Northern Ireland, and with this influx there came a need for programmes on religious diversity. Corrymeela's new vision was stated as such:

⁵⁵⁰ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 117-8.

⁵⁵¹ A show dedicated to ideas on religion and ethics.

⁵⁵² McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 130-1.

To be a sign and symbol that Protestants and Catholics can share together in a common witness and ministry of reconciliation; to provide opportunities for meeting, dialogue and learning in communities to dispel ignorance, prejudice and fear and to promote mutual respect, trust and co-operation; to support victims of violence and injustice; to enable the healing of personal and social wounds and to promote new initiatives for social and political change; to address contemporary issues of faith and ethics and develop new expressions of Christian community, life, and worship.⁵⁵³

Along with aiding in the sharpening of Corrymeela's vision, Craig began to emphasise the importance of more structured engagement with the young people who were coming to Ballycastle. Williams, on the other hand, found his role as leader of Corrymeela involving him more in finances than in community relations. "We were hugely stretched just to keep going, and at the same time the demands suddenly increased about our accountability in financial matters," he said.⁵⁵⁴

It was in the late 1990s that both Craig and Williams began to realise two issues that were affecting Corrymeela: its size and the diverse nature of its participants. The bureaucracy that came with trying to make decisions in a Community with over 200 members began to take its toll on the leader and centre director. Williams recalled: "We always had a fear of expanding too much, and we never wanted to build an empire."⁵⁵⁵ In Ballycastle, fundraising for maintenance on the centre was crucial, and with this influx of money there came an increased need for accountability. Craig remembered: "I think there was a sense of fear among some people that professionalism was taking over and that staff were becoming more powerful than the Community."⁵⁵⁶ Craig's answer to this problem was for the Community to downsize to two

⁵⁵³ The Corrymeela Community, *The Corrymeela Community-Who we are*, http://www.corrymeela.org-who_we_are-who_we_are.html, [accessed 17 June 2002] quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 123.

⁵⁵⁴ Trevor Williams quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 134.

⁵⁵⁵ Trevor Williams quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 135.

⁵⁵⁶ Colin Craig quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 125.

buildings and increase the number of volunteers in the Community. “In short, we need to advance volunteerism, to reduce staffing and to start applying ourselves to a post-sectarian world,”⁵⁵⁷ he said. Another transition in this “post-sectarian world” was a swell in religious diversity within Northern Ireland. Craig noticed increasingly that the individuals coming to Corrymeela were not always interested in the Christian aspects of centre:

We were living in a society that was secularising fast and we were in a Christian community that, for example, worshipped twice daily in the *Croi*. Those of us who grew up in the earlier period were comfortable with the language of worship, but I was increasingly aware of young volunteers who wanted to engage with Corrymeela, but had not come out of a church environment.⁵⁵⁸

The desire to remain an open village, mixed with the increasingly multi-faith reality of Northern Ireland, all occurring together in a Christian-based Community meant that establishing a clear identity was difficult. The lack of black and white theological answers put the Community in a situation which, according to Craig, mirrored some aspects of the inherent problems within such movements as the Alliance political party.⁵⁵⁹ These problems were best exemplified through public feelings of distrust towards Corrymeela from some of the highly politically-oriented churches of Northern Ireland and aversion from those who desired no faith-based association.

The multi-faith dimension was especially difficult to balance at the centre, as attempts to incorporate a place for Muslim worship at Ballycastle created fears in members who believed such a move would make it seem as though the Community was leaving behind its Christian heritage.⁵⁶⁰ This fear was unfounded, according to Craig. “The [Holy] spirit is deep inside Corrymeela. There is always a mystery to Corrymeela which you can describe as magical or

⁵⁵⁷ Colin Craig quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 128.

⁵⁵⁸ Colin Craig quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 127.

⁵⁵⁹ A cross-community political party.

⁵⁶⁰ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 127.

spiritual,” he said. “When you stay on that site in Ballycastle, something happens, people engage with one another in a new way.”⁵⁶¹ With these and the ever-present financial issues looming during the 1990s, Williams stated that his time as leader gave him “little time to dream dreams,”⁵⁶² as it was a necessary period of restructuring for the Community in order to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse nature of post-Troubles Northern Ireland. In his final statement as leader, Williams discussed the demand that the centre at Ballycastle was placing on the paid staff of Corrymeela. While the increase in numbers was beneficial, he worried about the long-term effect on the dispersed Community at large.⁵⁶³

After Williams departed in 2004, David Stevens became the Community’s first non-ordained leader. He did not lack for experience in the local churches, however, as he served the Irish Council of Churches for twenty years and was a long-standing member of the Corrymeela Community.⁵⁶⁴ Stevens inherited the same financial challenges as Williams, as well a set of new ones, as funding continued to decrease for community relations projects. These struggles led to redundancies in paid staff at the Community and the decision to close the Knocklayd centre in order to have more resources for the centre at Ballycastle. These decisions were difficult for the new leader, who described his first year at Corrymeela as a “baptism of fire.”⁵⁶⁵ Another difficult decision came with the announcement that the Corrymeela Link would be closed. The reasoning behind this concerned the ageing members of the Link, but most importantly to Stevens, the inability of the Community to sustain what had been created during the Troubles.

⁵⁶¹ Colin Craig quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 127.

⁵⁶² Trevor Williams quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 139.

⁵⁶³ Trevor Williams quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 139.

⁵⁶⁴ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 188.

⁵⁶⁵ David Stevens quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 194.

He explained: “If you don’t have money, you don’t survive. I don’t see myself as a ‘hard man,’ but I am willing to make cut-backs. It isn’t a choice; it’s a matter of survival.”⁵⁶⁶

The second problem that Stevens faced as new leader was the hiring of a centre director. Frank Nealis, who was director at the time, had been placed on sick leave, and interim replacements followed. In March 2005, Nealis resigned and a replacement search began. Ronnie Millar, a former Corrymeela volunteer, was hired in June 2005. The Corrymeela to which Millar came to work was very different than that of the 1970s when he was a volunteer. Improved relations in the peace process meant less funding for projects such as Corrymeela, and there was a need for resourcefulness when it came to running programmes at the Ballycastle centre.⁵⁶⁷ Millar’s job, along with the practical sides of running the Ballycastle centre, also included understanding how Corrymeela could be of assistance to those living in post-Troubles Northern Ireland. Research into possible future programmes resulted in an increasing number of workshops at Ballycastle for victims of the Troubles and also for the newly emerging immigrant population.⁵⁶⁸ Along with the new programmes came the desire to upgrade the Ballycastle centre’s facilities. Millar, along with Stevens, hoped to raise £3 million for the renovation of both the *Croi* and the volunteer accommodation known as Coventry.⁵⁶⁹

In 2008, under the leadership of Stevens, a new strategic plan was created for the Corrymeela Community that would last until 2013. This document stated that, based on the Community’s understanding of the Gospel in Northern Ireland, members had lived by three main themes: reconciliation, breaking down enmity and distrust, and the building of

⁵⁶⁶ David Stevens quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 194.

⁵⁶⁷ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 201.

⁵⁶⁸ Ronnie Millar quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 204-5.

⁵⁶⁹ As of 2009, £2 million has been raised and renovations have taken place on both Coventry and the *Croi*. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

community.⁵⁷⁰ Based on this understanding, the Community created a new series of mission, values, and vision for the next five years based on a “Christian commitment to discern and follow in the way of Jesus in living out the Gospel of peace, reconciliation, social justice and service to others in our lives.”⁵⁷¹

The values mentioned in this statement were later described as openness, compassion, and hope. According to the Community, openness means that everyone is included and accepted while in a safe space; they are thus able to tell their own story. Compassion ensures that members commit themselves to “empathy, acceptance and service”⁵⁷² and to being examples of repentance and forgiveness. Hope includes a commitment to making a difference in Northern Ireland despite setbacks that might occur. According to the document, “it is not blind optimism,”⁵⁷³ but a desire to inspire others with the message of reconciliation that has already influenced those working within Corrymeela. These values ultimately serve as the means to the mission of the Community, which is as follows: “To embrace difference, heal divisions and enable reconciliation.”⁵⁷⁴

A Corporate Historical and Theological Summary for Corrymeela

The church at large does not accept our [Corrymeela’s] theology. We are challenging completely the broad central ground, and indeed more than that.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁰ The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan: 2008-2013* (November 2008), 6.

⁵⁷¹ The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan*, 7.

⁵⁷² The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan*, 7.

⁵⁷³ The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan*, 7.

⁵⁷⁴ The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan*, 6.

⁵⁷⁵ John Morrow quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 92.

Corrymeela was created in a context that was ripe with theological debate. The 1960s saw local churches in Northern Ireland in a bid to define themselves against “the other,” with little concern over ecumenism. Whilst divisive theological issues (such as the debate over Eucharist and Marian theology) raged on, the practical lives of Protestants and Catholics remained unequal and separated. The seeming lack of concern from the churches about the plights of both groups caused many parishioners to search for other means of living out their Christian faith. It was against this historical background that Corrymeela was created.⁵⁷⁶ According to Ronald Wells, the author of *People Behind the Peace*,⁵⁷⁷ the Corrymeela Community decided from its inception to avoid the theological disputes that were causing major divisions in the religious world of 1960s Northern Ireland, and instead to focus on a practical faith based on a common idea: community.⁵⁷⁸ Despite this lack of a formal theological base, several theologians from around the world influenced the Community. Published aims and visions of the Community, which have been continuously adapted according to the local context, also served as a means of examining the practical theology of the Community at any given time. Finally, the leaders of Corrymeela, each with their strengths and weaknesses, have acted as theological figureheads for the work of the Community.

From a historical perspective, Davey’s witness to the devastation of World War II, his work with soldiers in a community setting, and his later visits to international Christian communities confirmed in his mind the importance of living together in Christian unity. According to Davey, if a country is unable to accept members of its own community, the devastating acts of war are inevitable. From a theological perspective, the work of George

⁵⁷⁶ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 118-9.

⁵⁷⁷ Ronald A. Wells, *People Behind the Peace: Community and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

⁵⁷⁸ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 77-9

McLeod (Iona Community) and Tullio Vinay (Agape Community) inspired both Davey and the burgeoning Community. It was thus a combination of the theology of McLeod and Vinay that lent itself to the first Corrymeela public vision, outlined in a speech on the Community's opening day by Vinay himself.

Once the Community was established and the onset of the Troubles began, theology again became an issue with many members who wanted a structured vision. The dangers of denominationalism seemed to be a threat to the Community as a whole.⁵⁷⁹ Some members, keen to state their position clearly amidst the increasing violence, wished to establish Corrymeela as a Protestant community. This suggestion was not adopted, and in hindsight would have been difficult to maintain, with the onset of the Troubles in sight. Consequently, the idea of adopting a "lowest common denominator"⁵⁸⁰ theology for the Community was assumed in the hopes that, despite theological differences, Catholics and Protestants could live together in a Christian community. Membership would be offered to people who confirmed their belief in God as manifested in Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of the Spirit, and, according to Wells "Theology, as such, would be developed as the Community dealt with specific problems and situations."⁵⁸¹

While Christian community was the basis of the initial vision of Corrymeela, Davey's use of the word reconciliation, which up until the creation of Corrymeela was not commonplace in Northern Ireland,⁵⁸² seemed to serve as a unifying theological theme for the Community. Stevens explained what this word represented to the Community at the time: "It [reconciliation]

⁵⁷⁹ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 59.

⁵⁸⁰ This phrase is used by Ronald Wells. Wells argues that it could be assumed this was the attitude of the Corrymeela Community during this time period, though he does not agree. I would differ, based upon the idea that theology served as a divisive force in Northern Ireland. Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 77.

⁵⁸¹ Wells, *People Behind the Peace*, 77.

⁵⁸² "Ray Davey was a prophet in the 1960s. He was talking about reconciliation and relationships at a time when nobody else was doing so." David Stevens quoted in McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 196-7.

gave special focus to the task of breaking down enmity and distrust. It expressed a sense of going on a new journey into new relationships and the hope that we might be a catalyst for social and political change in Church and society.”⁵⁸³ As the 1960s and 70s saw the worst violence of the Troubles, the conceptual ideas of reconciliation turned into a practical theology. For the Community, reconciliation meant keeping those who were most vulnerable to violence out of the worst-hit areas. Reconciliation became hospitality for those volunteering at the Ballycastle centre, as they attempted to make a home for those who had lost their own.

The 1980s served as a time of spiritual renewal for the Community, as there was more time to examine theological matters than there was during the height of the Troubles. As leader, John Morrow brought with him perspectives from several different theologians who were focused on the idea of community. Morrow saw the Corrymeela model of reconciliation as “a people on a new journey,”⁵⁸⁴ where “only by learning to live and share together in new ways can we begin to forge an alternative pattern which transcends past struggles for domination between different national, cultural and religious traditions.”⁵⁸⁵ The idea of living together, and the struggles that this brought, led Morrow to the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rene Girard (as explained by Roel Kaptein), and Jean Vanier. Vanier and Bonhoeffer’s ideas concerning community and Kaptein’s explanation of Girard’s ‘mimesis’⁵⁸⁶ and ‘scapegoating’⁵⁸⁷ rang true within the communities of Northern Ireland, which were so strictly divided against the “other.”⁵⁸⁸ These theological understandings, although introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, are still evident in the writings of those currently associated with Corrymeela. By the mid 1980s, a

⁵⁸³ David Stevens quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 246.

⁵⁸⁴ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 35.

⁵⁸⁵ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 34.

⁵⁸⁶ In human culture, mimesis is desire. This desire often clashes with another person’s desire and creates violence. Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 68.

⁵⁸⁷ Because of mimesis there is violence, and accordingly, a scapegoat is created to stabilise society once more. Once the scapegoat has been driven out, peace will return. Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 69-70.

⁵⁸⁸ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 68-9.

new public vision for Corrymeela placed the Community firmly in the Northern Ireland context, and addressed specific issues within the local community. The centre, once stated as being an example to the churches, had expanded to being an example for the community at large.

The peace process of the 1990s saw this vision of Corrymeela developed with the local context into a post-Troubles reality. Programmes were created that catered to the needs of those living as victims in Northern Ireland. This new vision spoke of reconciliation almost exclusively non-institutional level, with no mention of the local church. The Community's desire was to be a sign of reconciliation; promote dialogue and education of the "other;" offer victim support; and understand the idea of Christianity in a contemporary world.⁵⁸⁹ This Corrymeela vision seemed to emphasise the importance of the centre primarily as a place of support for the practical work of reconciliation, and secondly as a Christian community. According to Power: "[In the vision] they presented a more positive picture of the work of the Community as a place where reconciliation was actually happening, rather than expressing a hope that Corrymeela would be a place where reconciliation would occur."⁵⁹⁰ This change was significant from a theological perspective, as there had previously been an emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the director of the Community and the champion of its successes. For example, Morrow stated during his time as leader in the 1980s: "It is our task to prepare the ground, sow the seeds, nourish the plants and reap the harvest, but it is God alone who brings the growth and brings in His Kingdom." This statement can be viewed in contrast to that of Trevor Williams, the leader in the 1990s: "Essentially we are a group of Protestants and Catholics who are on a

⁵⁸⁹ The Corrymeela Community, The Corrymeela Community-Who we are, http://www.corrymeela.org/who_we_are-who_we_are.html [accessed 17 June 2002] quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 122-3.

⁵⁹⁰ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 123.

journey of reconciliation with one another. Basically our centres are about places where people can come and join us on that journey of reconciliation.”⁵⁹¹

The corporate theology of Corrymeela has been a journey of sorts. In many aspects, this journey has consisted of groups of people from different backgrounds bearing witness to the fact that reconciliation in a community setting is possible. Theological matters were addressed as they came, or, perhaps more accurately, as they became problems in the Community. From the onset, the basic theology that was accepted was a vertical interpretation of the theology of reconciliation. During the height of the Troubles, theology was avoided, as it had historically been divisive in Northern Ireland society. The idea of reconciliation (vertically and horizontally), however, a seemingly acceptable theological idea on both sides, was widely discussed. Using this broad common theme as a theological basis presented difficulties for some who wished to remain faithful to their specific denominational beliefs, as well as for churches, some of which would not align with an organisation so vaguely represented. This development, along with increasingly political polarity in the 1980s, caused a movement from traditional theological and political debates to those dealing with the ideas of society and community (as seen in the work of Jean Vanier, Rene Girard and Dietrich Bonhoeffer). There was, again, a shift from the dividing ideas of traditional theology and 1980s politics to a more practical realm like reconciliation, only this time the theme was community. For those wishing to dig deeper into their spirituality, the addition of spaces such as the *Croi*, the Knocklayd centre, and the local cell group gave members places of worship and reflection. The 1990s, and the ensuing peace process, brought new challenges to the Community as it struggled with the idea of interfaith relations and finding appropriate programmes for those who suffered during the Troubles. The emphasis of the public visions of the Community seemed to switch from a Spirit-

⁵⁹¹ Trevor Williams quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 123.

guided aid in the process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland to a place where reconciliation occurred, if one was willing to be a part of it.

With the addition of Stevens as leader in the 2000s, there came a need to cut out aspects of the centre that were redundant and build up programmes that were financially beneficial to the Community as a whole. There seemed, with Stevens, a return to traditional theological concepts, as was suggested by his publications on the theology of reconciliation by the Corrymeela Press.⁵⁹² There still remains, however, an ambiguous stance when it comes to pressing issues such as interfaith relations both outside and within the Community.⁵⁹³ Despite its history, it seems impossible for the Community to continue to apply its “theology as you go” approach to these modern issues, as they are already a part of the Corrymeela of today. The following sections offer insight into what the Corrymeela of today actually looks like. This information is based primarily on interviews, fieldwork and current Community publications.

The Corrymeela Community Today

The Belfast Office

The Community, which began with forty members in 1965, has maintained a member count of roughly 150 for the past few years. The two main physical sites of the Corrymeela

⁵⁹² Stevens’s books have an emphasis on more debatable ideas of reconciliation such as truth, peace, mercy, and justice whilst also discussing reconciliation on a practical level. David Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 22-3 and 33.

⁵⁹³ A return to the original, more simplistic, vision of Corrymeela was hoped for by the late John Morrow: “When the Community was founded in 1965, the original group did not envisage that we would be so preoccupied with reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Part of our earlier vision was about the renewal of the church, the nature of Christian community, the vocation of lay people in the world and the wider issues of world peace and social change. Hopefully, if the peace process progresses, we will be able to give more priority to some of those earlier agendas.” Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 72.

Community are the offices at “Number 8” in Belfast and the centre at Ballycastle. In the Belfast offices reside an administration and fundraising team, project workers, and the current Community leader.⁵⁹⁴ “Number 8” seems to operate very much like any other non-governmental organization (NGO) office, with all the concerns and issues that go along with such an endeavour. Stevens confirmed the dual identity of Corrymeela and likewise his role as leader: “I have two roles, I suppose. One is I’m the leader of this non-residential Christian community and I’m sort of Chief Executive of a medium-size charity, and there could be tensions between these two roles.”⁵⁹⁵ The administration, volunteer coordinators, and fundraising team also tend to have dual identities, as oftentimes workers share roles. A good example of this is Jo Watson,⁵⁹⁶ who serves as both the fund-raising director and the editor of the Corrymeela magazine. Although seemingly different jobs, she viewed them as connected, as she used the magazine as a means to reach out to potential donors. Most of those working at the Belfast office seem aware that they do not have just one job description, but are instead required to fulfill several roles within the Community.

The largest constituency of hired staff in Belfast are the project workers. There are currently eight operating out of the Belfast offices. Their roles include the following: a Forgiveness Education Worker who works with the school systems to encourage the forgiveness education curriculum;⁵⁹⁷ an Inclusive Neighbourhood Project Worker who works towards inclusion for the community of asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland;⁵⁹⁸ a Community Partners Project Worker who works with the different reconciliation initiatives in

⁵⁹⁴ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 33.

⁵⁹⁵ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 55.

⁵⁹⁶ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 35.

⁵⁹⁷ The Corrymeela Community, *Forgiveness Education Introduction and Overview* (Belfast: The Corrymeela Community, undated), 1-2.

⁵⁹⁸ The Corrymeela Community, “Inclusive Neighbourhood Project,” The Official Corrymeela Website, <http://www.corrymeela.org/article/inp.aspx> [accessed 3 March 2010].

the Belfast area;⁵⁹⁹ a Youth Programme Worker who conducts programmes exclusively with youth both in Belfast and at the centre in Ballycastle;⁶⁰⁰ a Faith and Life Worker, who connects non-members (of Corrymeela) in Belfast with Corrymeela's programmes;⁶⁰¹ a Family Groups Worker who works exclusively with family units;⁶⁰² and Primary and Secondary School Programme Workers, who work directly with the local school system to promote Corrymeela's cross-community ventures.⁶⁰³ Faith and Life worker Emma Cowan explained the role of the project workers:

There are a lot of people out there in Belfast who are looking for community, who are looking for intentionality, who are looking for something that does mix faith and action which is this whole [reason] of doing more work in Belfast. I'm not based at the centre, I'm based here. It's to bring some sort of momentum to what happens in Belfast.⁶⁰⁴

Although the project workers spend most of their time in the local community, they often utilise the Ballycastle centre⁶⁰⁵ by bringing their groups up for residentials. This remains secondary, however, as they attempt to show that their respective projects' first aim is life in conflicted areas.

The Corrymeela offices in Belfast currently represent the communication hub of the Community at large. On any given day there are buses full of volunteers and children leaving the area for Ballycastle, project workers going up and down the stairs discussing Community programmes, phone calls and inquiries concerning volunteering, and discussions on fund-

⁵⁹⁹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶⁰⁰ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶⁰¹ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 27.

⁶⁰² Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶⁰³ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 41.

⁶⁰⁴ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 11.

⁶⁰⁵ Ronnie Millar, centre director, stated that Project Workers get priority for residential dates at the Ballycastle centre. Following those dates priority is balanced between paying and subsidised groups. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

raising initiatives. Covering the walls of the office are newspaper clippings, the Corrymeela magazine, and books by current and former members and leaders of the Community. These publications seem to serve as reminders both of the Community's identity and its actions. These displays gave the impression that perhaps the most important thing for the Community is to remember its origins, and to use this base to analyse where it should go next.⁶⁰⁶

The Ballycastle Centre

The Ballycastle centre is still the heart of the dispersed Corrymeela Community, as members, volunteers and donors continue to meet there throughout the year.⁶⁰⁷ Those living or working onsite at the Ballycastle include the centre director, who oversees the centre programmes;⁶⁰⁸ the volunteer coordinator, whose job is to be a support for the volunteers as well as a resource for their work; kitchen, cleaning and maintenance staff, who keep the centre running from a practical standpoint; volunteers, who work with the groups and aid the staff in running the centre; a resource couple, who live with the volunteers and serve their spiritual needs through counselling and worship; and a member "presence" that is representative of the wider Cornerstone Community. Occasionally present are those who are located at the Belfast offices.⁶⁰⁹ Throughout the year the centre serves around 8,000 visitors, averaging about seventy groups.⁶¹⁰

The centre itself is located on the North Antrim coast and sits on several acres of land atop a steep cliff overlooking the ocean. While some involved with Corrymeela stated a desire

⁶⁰⁶ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶⁰⁷ The Corrymeela Community, *Strategic Plan 2008-2013*, 3, 11-13.

⁶⁰⁸ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 30.

⁶⁰⁹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶¹⁰ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 28.

for the centre not to resemble a residential centre or a camp, the buildings lend themselves to this style. The main building houses registration, the kitchen and canteen, a large meeting area, several conference rooms, and some residential housing.⁶¹¹ Coventry, which is located opposite the main house, is home to the volunteer staff and the resource couple. Building was undertaken on a new Coventry in 2008, and in 2009 the first set of long-term volunteers began residing in the new building. This structure has a modern feel, with open spaces and meeting rooms as well as dormitory-style residence. Directly outside Coventry is The Village, which houses the majority of people who attend residentials at Corrymeela. In the centre of the property are a playground, open space, and the activities buildings. These buildings are home to a sports room, recreational closet, and an arts and crafts area. Also located in the middle of the centre is the *Croi*, which, with its unusual stone style, looks distinct among the modern buildings on site.⁶¹²

What gives these buildings character is the plethora of stories that goes along with their creation. These stories include descriptions by the early members who worked together to build these original structures by hand, and the feeling of community that resulted. Upon leaving the main house is the “Golden Garden,” a circular garden filled with yellow daffodils. It was created for the Ray Daveys’ golden wedding anniversary, and it is difficult to walk through it without being reminded of his influence on the Community. There is a tree planted outside the main building in honour of Anna Glass, who worked in the kitchen at Corrymeela from 1966-2007. The ashes of John Morrow and his wife Shirley are also located on site.⁶¹³ The playground was built in memory of Sean Armstrong, a Belfast community worker who was shot in 1973 by a Loyalist paramilitary.⁶¹⁴ The original Coventry house was created through

⁶¹¹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶¹² Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶¹³ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 47.

⁶¹⁴ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 54-6.

donations associated with the Coventry Cross of Nails⁶¹⁵ network, which acknowledges communities worldwide that work towards peace and reconciliation.⁶¹⁶ The *Croi* has its own memories, as described by Ray Davey: “Sometimes I like to sit in the quiet of the *Croi* and remember all those who come here through the year to pray: the politicians, the teachers, the social workers, community leaders, many with their young people; the different clergy and theologians.”⁶¹⁷ These memorials are oftentimes visited by way of pilgrimages through the centre grounds, where each stop’s history is explained in connection with the Community. There is a sense at the Ballycastle site, as well as at the Belfast offices, of the need to remember the legacy of those who came before. This was confirmed by former volunteer Yvonne Naylor, who commented on a recent residential at Ballycastle: “I was very aware of the cloud of witnesses, that silent cloud of witnesses that accompanies me [at the centre].”⁶¹⁸

Volunteers at the Ballycastle centre are divided into three categories: long-term (one year), mid-term (varies, minimum three weeks) and short-term (one week at the most at a given time). Each new term, which begins in August, a new set of long-term volunteers (LTV) is recruited on a one-year contract to facilitate programmes and offer support to the practical running of the centre. They are overseen by the centre director and a volunteer director, who work together to guide and support the volunteers. Mondays are reserved as a time when all long-term volunteers and leadership at the centre are able to come together and organise themselves for the coming week.⁶¹⁹ Ronnie Millar, current centre director, explained:

⁶¹⁵ This organisation is named as such because of Coventry Cathedral, which was destroyed in World War II. Community of the Cross of Nails, “An Overview,” The Official Website of the Community of the Cross of Nails, <http://www.crossofnails.org-about-> [accessed 12 March 2009].

⁶¹⁶ McCreary, *In War and Peace*, 57.

⁶¹⁷ Davey, *Channel of Peace*, 120.

⁶¹⁸ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 47.

⁶¹⁹ One LTV criticised this as being the only time in which the staff were able to organise themselves for the coming week, and that it simply was not long enough. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

We set aside every Monday to look at reflections and how we are with each other what we are learning about being with the groups and training around this, and our training programmes are about what do we do with groups, how do we facilitate conversations, how do we facilitate activities that would help people see that difference is a good thing.⁶²⁰

The volunteer population is the most diverse section of the Corrymeela Community, as those coming to volunteer are recruited from all parts of the world. The selection process for volunteers is unclear to me, as there seemed no set way of evaluating who should or should not be a volunteer, but it would appear that the main objective is diversity. Those represented in the LTV population in 2008-09 were of all different races, backgrounds, and religions.⁶²¹ This diversity does not come, however, without its share of problems.

By spring of 2009, three LTV had left Corrymeela due to personal reasons, visa issues, and a violation of Corrymeela rules. This had left the group not only disheartened, but severely understaffed too. More mid-term volunteers (MTV) and short-term volunteers (STV) were required, but the need for permanent trained staff was evident. One member of Corrymeela stated that focus on fund-raising was causing neglect in this area of training for volunteers, and the Community's programmes were living "hand to mouth."⁶²² The volunteers who remained were visibly burnt out, although based on interviews with leader David Stevens, fund-raising director Jo Watson, and member Yvonne Naylor, the stress of working at the centre is common. Watson said: "Corrymeela can take you in and swallow you whole. Corrymeela will let you work as many hours as you choose to do. So I mean you can imagine centre director could be doing sixty hours a week, seventy hours a week."⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 28.

⁶²¹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²² Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²³ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 85.

Burnout is not, however, just an issue with volunteers. There is a sense of urgency when it comes to maintaining a structure as complex as Corrymeela, and with the changing situation in Northern Ireland, it is difficult to finance all the different programmes. This, in turn, forces those who serve at Belfast and Ballycastle, such as the fund-raising director and the leader, to stay almost exclusively in Belfast working towards acquiring funds. This prevents those workers in Belfast from being able to completely understand what is going on at the centre and vice versa. Thus there is a divide between those who are behind the scenes keeping the centre running and those who are at the centre working with groups.⁶²⁴

An issue that seems apparent to me, along with the danger of burnout, is the reality of the interfaith dimension among the volunteers at Corrymeela. Among the LTV is at least one practicing Muslim, who is commonly on the outskirts of some social activities among the LTV. This is a result of several cultural and religious issues ranging from the inability to participate in Christian activities to not being able to be around alcohol. There is also no form of Islamic public worship in which this volunteer might participate, although all worship areas are open to everyone for use.⁶²⁵ The adopted course of action for someone of a different faith at the centre is, seemingly, to accept but ignore (as opposed to accept and acknowledge) the need for adaptations. This idea is confirmed when worship times are announced each evening. There is a hurried, apologetic tone used by more than one member of staff and volunteers when the announcement is made that worship will be in the *Croi*. Some Christian participants were

⁶²⁴ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²⁵ Ronnie Millar, centre director, spoke of the hope for Corrymeela's LTV staff to become increasingly diverse in the following years. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

unaware that worship at the centre even existed. When asked about worship times, some groups at the centre did not realise that any type of Christian worship occurred.⁶²⁶

A common feeling at the Ballycastle centre is the sense that one's commitment to the Community is constantly being evaluated. There is a strong feeling of deep ownership from those working in the kitchen and general maintenance, as well as from the members, and there is often an apparent divide between those who have been working in the Community for a long time and those who are transitory. This feeling was reflected in the words of a LTV who stated that it seemed as though the members and paid staff "felt they owned the place, while we do so much work for the Community every day."⁶²⁷ This divide goes as far as the volunteer pool. The LTV, who are in separate halls as the MTV and STV, have a sign stating that any non-LTV must get permission to enter their area. While creating a seeming divide, most LTV defended this by saying that they actually live in the area and the MTV and STV just stay for a short time. For the LTV, therefore, the creation of a "home" space is important.⁶²⁸

While these areas of contention reside within the ranks of those working in Ballycastle, they do not seem to reflect on the work being accomplished through the programmes. All of the human elements required to create an atmosphere of openness, encounter, hospitality, community, and story⁶²⁹ come together when necessary. It is apparent that those working at the centre have a genuine desire to work for the Corrymeela vision, despite their different interpretations of what that might mean. The participants themselves must be credited as well, for they oftentimes become most interactive while doing "normal" activities outside of the

⁶²⁶ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²⁷ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²⁸ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶²⁹ A summary of the key elements of the original Corrymeela vision by David Stevens. David Stevens, *The Place Called Reconciliation*, 8.

programmes themselves.⁶³⁰ This reflects the importance of the neutral space that the centre provides, which is perhaps its biggest asset.

Publications

The Community uses the *Corrymeela Magazine* to offer perspectives on certain issues, some practical and some theological, for its dispersed members. While Jo Watson, the editor of the magazine, has stated that part of her job is to create a coherent view of the Community for others to see, it is obviously difficult with the diverse nature of those contributing to the articles. Upon inspection, however, two theological themes have been discussed at length in the latest issues: forgiveness and truth.

In an article written by the leader, David Stevens, he discusses the question of how attainable both truth and peace at the same time are in the context of Northern Ireland. He compares the situation in Northern Ireland to that of South Africa and contemplates whether the act of a truth commission would be beneficial. He says, “There is no necessary link between ‘truth’ and ‘reconciliation.’ The ‘truth’ may bring anger and further polarisation. There is a real issue of how much truth we can bear (as opposed to tribal vindication).”⁶³¹ Stevens goes on to describe the problem of truth, as Catholic-Protestants have different ideas of how things happened and for what reason, even public acts of violence. He fears that any delving into this truth on a public level could cause an upheaval in society because of a lack of clarity when it comes to the notion of what is truth or not. Stevens wonders, if this was to occur, “Can peace

⁶³⁰ For example, in terms of Catholic and Protestant youth, there was more interactive conversation while playing sports together than during the designed programmes. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁶³¹ David Stevens, “The Claims of Truth and Peace,” *Corrymeela Magazine* (Autumn-Winter 2007), 2.

survive the truth?”⁶³² He does not offer a solution to this problem, only stating that time and initiating some form of a shared truth must be established before the past can be dealt with properly. Stevens references a passage in Zechariah that states, “Therefore, love truth and peace.”⁶³³ He includes the caution that there will be, inevitably, tensions between these three but they represent what will have to happen for Northern Ireland to come to terms with what has happened in its history.

Forgiveness is also represented in the magazine with a few articles in the latest *Corrymeela Magazine*. In an article titled “Forgiveness and Victimhood” Michael Potter, the Policy and Research Officer for the Training of Women Network (TWN), offers his perspective on the idea of forgiveness:

[Post conflict processes] have taken place in many parts of the world. Yet these have usually taken place where one party is seen as having acted wrongly, and another party has won the moral argument. In Northern Ireland, transition is being attempted by agreement, which has led to different interpretations of the past, the nature of the conflict, the legitimacy of activities during the conflict and aspirations for the future. Neither side is right or wrong, so repentance is not necessary. The notion of victimhood is contested.⁶³⁴

Along the same lines is an article called, “Dealing with the Past,”⁶³⁵ David Stevens discusses the then unknown conclusions of the Eames-Bradley report. In the article he references the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman whose play “Purgatorio” deals with his experiences in a post-dictatorship Chile. In the play, according to Stevens, there are two people who are trapped in a room, one seemingly insane and the other a therapist who is trying desperately to help his

⁶³² Stevens, “The Claims of Truth and Peace,” 2.

⁶³³ Zech 8:19b.

⁶³⁴ Michael Potter, “Forgiveness and Victimhood,” *Corrymeela Magazine*, May 2006, 23.

⁶³⁵ David Stevens, “Dealing with the Past,” *Corrymeela Magazine*, Spring 2008.

patient. It is later revealed that they are, in fact, in purgatory until they both atone for hidden crimes they are keeping from the other. The play's emphasis is on the idea that all people are victims, perpetrators, healers and patients.⁶³⁶ Stevens likens this to the Northern Ireland context, where he notes the complexity of categorising people into groups such as perpetrators and victims for the sake of forgiveness and repentance.

Two other more practical themes that are discussed in recent publications are the idea of safe spaces and interfaith volunteers. David Stevens explains: "Corrymeela has learned the importance of safe spaces-spaces that allow people to feel secure and accepted, that allow the emergence of people's stories and questions."⁶³⁷ Along with space physical spaces, he also goes into depth about how spiritual safe spaces must begin within those who are working in reconciliation. Stevens describes these people as "Christ's ambassadors in the work of reconciliation," because those who work in the field mimic the acts of Jesus by putting their own identity secondary to that of their identity in a reconciling God. As Christ was willing to make space for all those who would believe, so must those who want to create a peaceful society. Stevens sums up this idea: "It is not enough to 'know' about reconciliation; we need places where people can experience trust and reconciliation and we need people who can 'model' reconciliation (in this they imitate Christ)."⁶³⁸

Another interesting article that was presented in the *Corrymeela Magazine* was from a Swedish STV who came to stay at the centre at Ballycastle. The woman who wrote the article is an atheist and she gives an open description of her experience at Corrymeela in the midst of so many Christian volunteers. She does not say that her time at the centre was beneficial or

⁶³⁶ Stevens, "Dealing with the Past," 25-6.

⁶³⁷ David Stevens, "Christ's Ambassadors in the Work of Reconciliation," *Corrymeela Magazine*, January 2007, 10.

⁶³⁸ Stevens, "Christ's Ambassadors in the Work of Reconciliation," 10.

detrimental. In fact, she says that she is unsure as to why she came to this Community to begin, for one of her last lines is: “Why am I here? Ask me in a few years.”⁶³⁹ She explained that she had a lot of respect for the Community and their willingness to discuss her qualms about religion, but that she often found herself apologising for her presence despite encouragement from the staff. This article offers insights into the future of Corrymeela with its Christian identity in an increasingly global and multi-faith reality.

The Dispersed Community: the Council, Cell Groups, Members, Friends, and the Aberdeen-London Support Groups

The dispersed Community of Corrymeela represents the bulk of its membership. The different categories of the dispersed often overlap, as members can be part of cell groups and also the residing council. The council is, as it has been from the beginning, the overseeing body to the Corrymeela Community. It is composed of members of the Community, and its job is to be the highest authority on points of contention.⁶⁴⁰ Friends of Corrymeela are in a separate category, as they represent those who wish to be a part of the vision of Corrymeela, do not have the means to be active members, but want to contribute financially to the Community.⁶⁴¹ Cell groups, as described earlier, are groups of Community members who meet in various areas of Northern Ireland and beyond to help continue the vision of Corrymeela locally. As of autumn 2008, there were fourteen cell groups where ninety-nine members and eighty-three Friends and others met. There is an open nature to cell groups, and it is not necessary for people to be members or involved directly with the Community; they simply must share the vision of

⁶³⁹ Jessica Gaitan, “Unafraid of Conflict: A Christian Community for Non-Christians?,” *Corrymeela Magazine*, Summer 2008, 21.

⁶⁴⁰ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 83. Watson also commented that the Council meetings begin with a prayer, which could cause issues if the Community goes more into the interfaith realm.

⁶⁴¹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

Corrymeela.⁶⁴² The London and Aberdeen Support Groups are akin to the Corrymeela Link that existed until the 2000s. The groups organise events, lectures, and fund-raisers under the name of Corrymeela. The London Support Group is associated with St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, with whom they do joint events.⁶⁴³

In summer 2009, Corrymeela member Yvonne Naylor did a comprehensive study on Corrymeela members, Friends, and volunteers at the Ballycastle centre, recording their thoughts on worship and the Christian nature of the Community. This study illustrated the complexities that exist at the centre from an interfaith and no faith perspective. The Ballycastle centre has two worship times everyday, 9:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. These sessions are coordinated by different people each day. Oftentimes it is the resource couple, who act as chaplains to the volunteers, who are in charge, other times volunteers or members. The problem with this system, according to the study, is that many people did not know how to lead worship and others did not want to or felt they did not have enough time, but were forced to "cover."⁶⁴⁴ Different perspectives were offered on the importance worship should have at the Community. Naylor interviewed some members and Friends who spoke of the centrality of worship to Corrymeela. One such Friend said: "Corrymeela is a Christian Centre. This should unequivocally be clear to all who participate in Corrymeela in any way, and especially to all who attend the Ballycastle centre. In terms of worship, this means there is no requirement on Corrymeela to offer anything other than Christian worship."⁶⁴⁵ Another issue remained for those who were practicing Christians. Two volunteers found themselves worshipping in local Ballycastle churches as opposed to on site, the reason being that "their needs were not

⁶⁴² Richard Naylor, "Cell Group Survey-Autumn 2008," *Corrymeela Magazine*, Autumn 2008, 1.

⁶⁴³ Mick Oliver, "London Support Group," *Corrymeela Magazine*, Winter 2009, 16.

⁶⁴⁴ Yvonne Naylor, *Worship at Corrymeela*, (study conducted at the Ballycastle centre, Ballycastle, September 2009), 2-3.

⁶⁴⁵ Friend of Corrymeela quoted in Naylor, *Worship at Corrymeela*, 5.

sufficiently met by centre worship.”⁶⁴⁶ The overwhelming feeling from the study was that Corrymeela, according to the members and Friends, should not give up its Christian ethos, should adjust worship to be more interdenominational, and should not offer interfaith services.⁶⁴⁷

It seems, from participating in life at Corrymeela, that there are divisions among the various groups mentioned in this section. While it is impossible to generalise the varying members that compose the Community, there are a few insights into their demographics. The dispersed Community is the oldest group and makes up the biggest Christian demographic. The employees and volunteers are much more diverse. Jo Watson explained:

So you have all these things where Corrymeela talks about peace and reconciliation and actually they struggle with their own community element, because we are people. I think what unites them is that you have a group of members who are coming at it from an emotional and faith commitment, and then you’ve got people who do it as a job, and then you’ve got the group in the middle, one foot in either camp.⁶⁴⁸

Those who represent “the foot in either camp” demographic appear to be those within Corrymeela most able to maintain both the Christian aspect of the Community and the need for the practicalities that come with running a residential centre. This group, along with its prescribed jobs, works to reconcile the faith-based members of the Community with the non-faith-based workers.

A description of the current state of Corrymeela would never be complete without the views of those who make up the Community itself. The following sections are presented in

⁶⁴⁶ Naylor, *Worship at Corrymeela*, 4.

⁶⁴⁷ Naylor, *Worship at Corrymeela*, 1-7.

⁶⁴⁸ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 79.

order to give a better insight into those who make up the Corrymeela Community today. They, as described by Jo Watson, represent faith-based workers, job-based workers, and those who are in the middle.

Personal Perspectives From Current Staff and Members⁶⁴⁹

Introduction

The following section will explore the historical and theological developments of a few key staff and members of Corrymeela. Each section will begin with a description of the participant's life from childhood to adulthood, both socially and theologically. Emphasis will be placed on people, places, and events that the individual believes helped further his or her desire to work in the field of reconciliation. The final sections will look at where the participants stand now in their theology of reconciliation. The conclusion will focus on common themes in the connection between the social and the theological in each case.

Emma Cowan-Faith and Life Project Worker, Belfast

Emma Cowan was raised in the rural midlands of Northern Ireland. The eldest of three siblings, she was born in 1978 to a mother who was a teacher and a father who was a farmer. Her parents' pairing was unusual for the time, as her father was a Protestant and her mother a Catholic. Cowan's grandparents were surprisingly accepting of the union, although perhaps a

⁶⁴⁹ These case studies are examples of different views that exist within the same category of "Corrymeela Today." They are, however, individual viewpoints and are not being used as representative of any particular group in the Community.

bit wary of its complications. These complications came to a head when it was time to decide what school Cowan and her siblings would attend. It was decided that they would attend the local state primary and secondary schools in order to avoid the necessity of having to be sent off to boarding school for a more neutral education.

After attending the state school for her primary and secondary education, she moved to a Catholic grammar school for her A-levels. Cowan explained that this move happened partially because she was very sensitive about her parents' marriage, and she often found herself denying that her mother worked at a local Catholic school to avoid teasing. It was after her move to the Catholic grammar school that she became increasingly aware of the differences that existed between the two methods of teaching history in each school. She observed:

So it was funny to kind of sit in the class and kind of go, "Oh my goodness, these schools are only miles apart and depending on who's teaching, or the ethos of the school, or whatever, depends on what you're actually taught." Then I was so aware then that the little heads that were around me were being shaped by what we were listening to.⁶⁵⁰

When asked why she was so keenly aware of the differences between the two schools, as opposed to blindly accepting what was being taught, Cowan explained that it was because of the openness that her parents adopted when it came to explaining the situation in Northern Ireland. Anytime there were acts of violence or politicians speaking on television, the family would gather to have a discussion about the political situation. These discussions resulted in a greater understanding of the family members' opinions on issues. "At our house, everything was up for debate, nothing was sacred in terms of history," Cowan said.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 1.

⁶⁵¹ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 2.

In her interview, Cowan debated the common misconception that living in the rural areas of Northern Ireland was peaceful compared to living in the seemingly more violent cities.

She said:

People would talk about sectarianism and talked about the divisions and everything else. And they'd say, 'Oh it must have been great out in the countryside,' or 'you never had any trouble out in the countryside.' And I often bite my tongue, because I think it's very, very different, the experiences. We had as much sectarianism in the countryside, well not as much, and again I don't want to make some kind of scale or anything, it was different, but it was very present.⁶⁵²

Cowan went on to explain this by saying that whereas the cities had some ambiguity when it came to identity, it was oftentimes more difficult in a small, rural environment to hide one's background. It was apparent, for example, that the Cowan family would have participated in Catholic ceremonies because of the local newspaper's coverage of such events. This caused Cowan to become somewhat of an identity "schizophrenic,"⁶⁵³ whereby she would play one part at home and another when she was at the local primary or secondary school.

This identity confusion continued when she began applying to universities. All of the schools to which she applied were outside of Northern Ireland, and she recalled the sign at Belfast International Airport that bid her farewell when she left for the University of Durham: "There was this big sign when you were leaving and it was this young person with their bags and then this saying, 'Are you part of the brain drain?' And it was awful for anyone who was leaving, it was like this guilt, you can't leave mother ship, you have to stay, you have to go to Queen's."⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵² Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 3.

⁶⁵³ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 3.

⁶⁵⁴ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 5.

Once at school, Cowan found her niche in social service activities, and during her time at Durham she led projects that ranged from environmental campaigns to human trafficking awareness. When asked why she was interested in doing so many projects, she cited her faith as a key factor:

I think a lot of it was motivated by faith, and not the narrow understanding that I'd been indoctrinated with here. Where you're in, you're out, you're saved, you're not. You do this or you don't do that, you don't smoke, you don't drink. All those kind of things. It has to be more than that. And there was just this big awakening [where I felt like] I really want to make a difference in the world, and I know that I've come from a place of conflict, and I don't really want to go back, but I do have something about me that can hold together, that can bridge two sets of the argument.⁶⁵⁵

The desire to be a bridge-builder continued after university, with Cowan traveling to different parts of the world on several different volunteering projects. Her most memorable of these was her work in Israel and Palestine. She volunteered with a local Christian, Palestinian family that was farming land in order to keep it from being taken over by the Israeli government. Cowan spent her time between the Palestinian areas and Jerusalem in order to maintain her desire for “mixing the worlds,”⁶⁵⁶ and it was on one such visit that she met a local rabbi who asked about her background. The rabbi said to her that the work she was doing in that area was great, but that it might be time for her to “go back and be a part of change at home.”⁶⁵⁷ This both challenged and aggravated Cowan, who had strong views of not returning to Northern Ireland. She did, however, return, initially motivated by her acceptance into the Peace Studies degree programme at the Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast. It was with the completion of this degree and through her work in a non-profit organisation that she was introduced to Susan

⁶⁵⁵ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 5.

⁶⁵⁶ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 8.

⁶⁵⁷ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 8.

McEwan, who worked with Corrymeela. McEwan encouraged Cowan to write up a job description for a post that did not yet exist at Corrymeela. The post had an emphasis on “social action and faith stuff, or inter-faith stuff.”⁶⁵⁸

Cowan got the position at Corrymeela and her official title stands as Faith and Life worker, which she described as being very broad in meaning: “It’s awareness raising, it’s education, it’s encounter work, it’s trying to bring some sort of life back [in Corrymeela]. I’m not on some kind of recruitment drive for the Community, not intentionally, but I think as a result of these events [people are finding out] that Corrymeela is not just for middle-class, older people.”⁶⁵⁹ Part of Cowan’s job is networking, and she holds tri-monthly community meetings that focus on different practical aspects of living in Northern Ireland. The first event involved the idea of economics in the Belfast area, and the latest meeting involved various discussions on the concepts of welcome and hospitality in the Northern Ireland context. Along with these events, Cowan is also involved in a youth exchange with the United States called Face to Face-Faith to Faith that encourages youth from different backgrounds to interact and learn from one another in a neutral setting.⁶⁶⁰ These activities encourage encounters not only with the “other” but also with oneself. Cowan saw the future of reconciliation in Northern Ireland as dependent on the idea that people have to become reconciled with the emotions that they have held back during the Troubles, learn to tell their stories, and come to terms with their trauma. With that, there can be a type of healing between the communities.⁶⁶¹

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Cowan focused on the ambiguity that comes with both of those terms. Reconciliation, she explained, is

⁶⁵⁸ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 9.

⁶⁵⁹ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 11.

⁶⁶⁰ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 12.

⁶⁶¹ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 13.

a term with many different facets and complications. What is not always acknowledged, she said, is the complication that simply comes with being a Christian. She described her work through Corrymeela as a way of seeing anew what it means to be a Christian who is reconciling and encouraging of acceptance. She acknowledged that Christian understanding of reconciliation is constantly evolving to meet the needs of those in the local community, and she explained: “It’s handy to be working at this Community at this moment because I think, through the stuff that we’re doing through these projects, I am redefining in a way how people perceive Corrymeela. I think that Corrymeela needs to move into a new phase.”⁶⁶² Through her work with the local community and her love of volunteering, she hopes to open Corrymeela up to wider, international, interfaith audience in the Belfast area. She explained this calling:

Just by the fact I’ve been born and by the fact that I’ve come from the families I come from and the parents I come from. And I feel like, therefore, it’s sort of a commission, it’s sort of a vocation, it’s sort of who I am, so I see it as really intrinsic to my nature as Emma, to be somebody who seeks justice, who seeks truth, mercy, [and] forgiveness.⁶⁶³

Ronnie Millar-Centre Director, Ballycastle

Ronnie Millar was born in London in 1964 to a Catholic mother and a Presbyterian father. His parents had been forced to marry outside of Northern Ireland because of their difference in religion, and Millar lived the first year of his life in England before the family returned to Northern Ireland, settling in the town of Antrim. Millar described Antrim as a very Protestant area of the country, meaning for Millar that being a Catholic was not always easy. He

⁶⁶² Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 13.

⁶⁶³ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 12.

attended the local Catholic primary school and then a Protestant grammar school. He described this transition:

And [I] was one of only ten students out of maybe 400 students; there were only ten Catholics in that [school]. So as a teenager I was very much a minority, a minority in the school and in the housing estate, the housing project. I was a Catholic in a very Protestant housing estate and a very Protestant school. So I quickly switched off in terms of religion, and in terms of church.”⁶⁶⁴

Millar experienced a confusion of identity because of his upbringing, and it eventually caused him to seek refuge in the punk rock scene of 1970s Belfast. The music encouraged anarchy, and it presented an inviting alternative to those who were not interested in the Republican-Loyalist fight and were “sick, sore and tired of listening to politicians condemn murders.”⁶⁶⁵ After a while, however, Millar grew despondent about the emptiness of his lifestyle. At the age of eighteen, he attended an inter-denominational church meeting and became interested in this style of cross-community worship and Bible study. It was a renewed interest in spirituality for Millar, and he continued to be a part of this church into his twenties, where he served as a deacon:

I continued along that route, in service, and I suppose I have an inclination to service and found a place, a sense of belonging in that group of Christians. We were exploring what it meant to be interdenominational in Northern Ireland, so I found a place in that gathering of people and I became a deacon actually, a server, a servant. I was deeply impressed with how Jesus served others and I became very involved.⁶⁶⁶

When Millar was thirty, the church that he had come to love and serve experienced a split. As a result, Millar felt disillusioned with the church establishment. “They [the church

⁶⁶⁴ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 25.

⁶⁶⁵ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 25.

⁶⁶⁶ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 26.

leaders] were fighting the wrong battles, they were taking a stand on important things, and then other things they were not willing to take a stand on stuff. And I felt there was a great silence and politeness,”⁶⁶⁷ he said. It was during this time period that Millar’s girlfriend Kelly, a volunteer at the Ballycastle centre, introduced him to Corrymeela. Although fully trained for a career in technology, Millar enjoyed volunteering on the weekends and generally helping out around the centre. It was at Corrymeela that Millar found a community of faithful people from different denominations working together for a common goal.

After marrying Kelly, Millar moved with her to the United States for eleven years. Upon his return to Northern Ireland in 2005, he took up the post of centre director at the Corrymeela centre in Ballycastle. He described the centre at Ballycastle as the “home of the dispersed Community,”⁶⁶⁸ and said he understood the centre director’s job description as being multi-faceted. As director he was, first and foremost, in charge of the human aspect of the centre, the live-in Community, the volunteers, and the groups who come to visit. He was also responsible for volunteer training, programme development, and the financial stability of the centre. The original vision and goals of Corrymeela are important to Millar and he explained that he tried to maintain a realistic attitude when it came to Catholic and Protestants meeting:

It’s really difficult when relationships are broken and people don’t trust each other. I’m at the stage that if somebody’s willing to take a half step towards the other, then that’s a good thing, that’s good now. I don’t expect people to be forgiving each other or for there to be solutions. I see it more in terms of relationships forming and possibilities of friendships emerging and seeing different perspectives and being more open to hearing stories from the other side, and for me I’ve been sort of part of that whole story of creating that safe space, where victims and survivors can share their stories in the presence of perpetrators. And there is something very, very sensitive about that and important about that.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 26.

⁶⁶⁸ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 28.

⁶⁶⁹ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 29.

Millar was also in charge of maintaining Corrymeela's "open door" ethos, which he saw as developing into an increasing multi-faith or no-faith dimension. He admitted that this could prove to be theologically difficult for the Community, but believed it was essential for the development of the Community in the modern world.⁶⁷⁰ On a personal level, Millar believed the Community at Corrymeela serves as a spiritual home for both him and those who lived on site:

In the mornings and the evenings we meet in the *Croi* for worship and sharing and reflections. This has been my community with volunteers and staff and the groups that come through here...and I think there is something about practicing the presence of God...That we know that God is everywhere, and that we know ... that the presence of God is all around us.⁶⁷¹

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Millar explained that being a Christian meant not only loving your neighbours, but proactively crossing the street to meet them. He expressed the necessity of sharing resources when it came to Christian reconciliation, and said that in Northern Ireland there was a lack of freedom when it came to the amount of sharing that could take place. He cited the Lord's Prayer as an example of a basic, common resource that had the ability to connect people from different denominations attempting to worship together. Alongside this, Millar's hope as director was to offer the centre as a common resource for any person who might want to learn about the "other." This meant, according to Millar, simultaneously holding true to the original vision of the founders while acknowledging a Northern Ireland that was changing politically, demographically, and religiously.⁶⁷²

⁶⁷⁰ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 28.

⁶⁷¹ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 27.

⁶⁷² Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 30.

Millar, who moved on from his position after summer 2009, said he believed that Corrymeela would continue to do good work. When asked to look back on his time at Corrymeela and pinpoint the hardest part of the idea of reconciliation, he answered that it was “politeness.”⁶⁷³ He said that many groups who came to the centre were so used to not speaking on certain subjects that they acted as though they felt nothing against the “other.” This politeness could last until a breakthrough occurred, at which point people could begin to understand their own bias. Millar insisted that these were the breakthrough moments that were hard to reach in the limited time that one had with groups at the centre, but which were the key to the process of reconciliation. Concluding, Millar spoke often of the idea of hope, and the notion that people in Northern Ireland seemed to have lost hope when it came to the idea of living in a normal society. He said:

So I would see [reconciliation], first of all at that level: participation and communication, and getting involved in local levels, even if it’s just local neighbourhood groups, or on a national level about holding people accountable and supporting them. And that sometimes is just an attitude thing that we need to move away from this pessimistic, it’s always raining. Because it’s not always raining in Northern Ireland, there is sunshine; there is hope for this place.⁶⁷⁴

*David Stevens- Leader of Corrymeela, Belfast*⁶⁷⁵

David Stevens grew up just outside of Belfast in the town of Holywood. Holywood was, during the 1950s and 60s, made up of people from England and Northern Ireland, primarily Protestants who had come to work at Bombardier, an airplane manufacturer. It was a place of

⁶⁷³ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 29.

⁶⁷⁴ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 29-30.

⁶⁷⁵ Since the time of this study David Stevens passed away and has been replaced as leader by Rev. Inderjit Bhogal.

relative calm, where the majority of tensions existed between the Anglican and Presbyterian wings of the Protestant community. The Catholics in Stevens's area were few, and he could remember knowing little about them, except that they crossed themselves on the bus while passing a church. He was born to Presbyterian parents who both came from backgrounds of "Protestant liberalism."⁶⁷⁶ His father was a town clerk who would have associated himself as a liberal candidate, and accordingly Stevens always had a sense of the inner-workings of local government. He attended the local primary school in Holywood and then grammar school at the Belfast Institute, located in Belfast's city centre. Stevens did not recall a particular agenda being taught at this school, but he did state that while an emphasis on Unionism may not have been blatant, it was still present: "I mean certainly, I have no ever memory of a liberal English teacher or history teacher. It certainly wasn't pushing Unionism in any explicit way, but I think it was implicit. This was a Protestant Unionist world."⁶⁷⁷

Stevens went on to describe this "Protestant Unionist world" that existed in Northern Ireland in the 1950s and 60s by saying that it seemed to him to be "a sort of suffocating place of silences where nothing much happened."⁶⁷⁸ It was a place where laws were held sacred, and where church was the centre of the community. This, along with the violence and injustice that was going on at the time in Northern Ireland, created a society that Stevens looked back on as being "in some ways paradoxically stable but deeply insecure."⁶⁷⁹ This frail attempt at stability spilled into the churches, where it was unusual to find members who would be willing to stand against the status quo of the community.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁶ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 53.

⁶⁷⁷ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 49.

⁶⁷⁸ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 50.

⁶⁷⁹ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 50.

⁶⁸⁰ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 52.

In the mid 1970s Stevens left Holywood and went to QUB to study chemistry. It was there, at an event for new students, that he came into contact with Ray Davey, who was chaplain at the Presbyterian Centre at the time. This was Stevens's introduction to Corrymeela and he remembered the feelings he had: "Well I thought there was a sort of wonderful sense of freedom, was my feeling about it. That it was so different to the prevailing reality."⁶⁸¹ Feeling a prevailing "dissatisfaction with the predominate religious and political reality in Northern Ireland,"⁶⁸² he worked for Corrymeela for several years before taking a position with the Irish Council of Churches. It was in this body that he found like-minded Protestants who were hoping to address the Troubles in both a spiritual and practical way.

His work at the Council eventually led him to his position at Corrymeela as the appointed leader of the Community. This position, although simple enough in name, is far more complicated when it comes to its actual job description. Stevens saw himself as having two roles in Corrymeela: "I'm the leader of this non-residential Christian community and I'm sort of Chief Executive of a medium-sized charity."⁶⁸³ He admitted that these two ideas were frequently in contention with one another, and that oftentimes he was almost completely working on the financial aspect of the Community because of the increasing lack of funding for local reconciliation initiatives. Stevens indicated that what kept him interested in the project were the moments when he saw that the centre was still doing good work for the Community. He said, however, that the job as leader of a Christian community in a changing society like Northern Ireland could have its consequences: "The danger is you can lose your soul in this, in

⁶⁸¹ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 53.

⁶⁸² David Stevens, Interview by Author, 53.

⁶⁸³ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 55.

all the complexities of trying to manage an entity that has to change, but finds it sometimes difficult to do so.”⁶⁸⁴

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Stevens referenced Ray Davey’s original vision for Corrymeela:

If you look at other Communities, some of their founding charisms are not about reconciliation. Iona talks more about justice, and I think that comes out of the 1930s Scotland. And if you look at, say the Focalarie, which is a Catholic renewal movement, their charisms are about unity. Or the Agape Community...which came out of Tullio Vinay...was around Agape, love. So different Communities can have different charisms, or founding visions, and I think the Corrymeela one was around reconciliation. That’s our theme, and I suppose it relates to Ray Davey’s wartime experiences in Dresden and it relates to the Northern Ireland thing.⁶⁸⁵

Stevens saw reconciliation, in the vertical aspect, as being central to the Gospel. The real question, he believed, was how this practically looked horizontally. Stevens understood why those in politics seem reluctant to discuss what reconciliation actually means. He described the Republicans as being more focused on justice and equality and those in the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) objecting to the word being used in any fashion other than vertically because of their Free Presbyterian influence.⁶⁸⁶ Despite this, Steven insisted the word is still a favourite in political settings, and people had chosen to interpret it how they wish, causing both political and theological confusion for the general public.⁶⁸⁷ On a grassroots level, Stevens understood the emphasis on the theme of reconciliation in Northern Ireland as being a direct result of the Catholic and Protestant environment, although he gave credit to Ray Davey as having brought the word into the local vernacular:

⁶⁸⁴ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 56.

⁶⁸⁵ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 52-3.

⁶⁸⁶ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 98.

⁶⁸⁷ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 54.

When Ray Davey started to use the discourse of reconciliation it was utterly marginal. And now it's become completely mainstream, so in one sense we've won, actually. People like Paisley and McGuinness and all have lost, but not because of us, but they've actually lost because the things we thought were important have actually been proven to be important.⁶⁸⁸

Jo Watson-Fundraising Director, Belfast

Jo Watson was born in North County Down in the affluent town of Helen's Bay. Her parents were both Church of Ireland Protestants, but her mother was from Cork City and thus served as counter-political to her father because of her sympathies for the unification of Ireland. Watson said that she believed her situation was unique for the 60s and 70s, as she often felt as though she could sympathise with those who were raised in mixed marriages: "So I think when you're talking about sowing the seeds [for future work in reconciliation] what was different was that we were very much a mixed family, but we were the same religion."⁶⁸⁹ Watson believed that much of her interest in reconciliation had to do with the variety of ideas and opinions she came into contact with through her family. Every summer she visited her grandmother in Cork, and she said this offered her an outside perspective on the conflict in Northern Ireland. For example, upon entering a shop in Cork, she opened her bag to be searched even though that was not required. She was baffled by this: "You were conditioned that you didn't get into a shop till you showed you weren't carrying anything. So you knew then, even as an early child, that

⁶⁸⁸ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 54 and 57.

⁶⁸⁹ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 59.

where you lived was different. Because when you went somewhere else you didn't do all the things you thought you needed to do.”⁶⁹⁰

Her mother, on these trips, would give Watson different perspectives on historical events that occurred in the towns they visited. This was important for Watson, as Irish history was not taught in her school. In contrast, her father came from a British, military background and had served in World War II. Despite the difference between her mother and father, the marriage flourished. She explained: “So you had a mix of the two going on, but it worked, there was a difference of opinion and I understood that from an early age.”⁶⁹¹ This difference of opinion was so clear that on voting day each parent would sneak out to try to get to the voting booth without being noticed by the other. This political division in the household extended to the church, as Watson remembered that her local church had no cross-community events and a Union Jack ever-present in its sanctuary. This seemed normal to her; as a child she did not know the significance. She recalled, however, her mother explaining to her on Remembrance Sunday the importance of remembering all the troops that had died in battle, not just the British ones.⁶⁹²

Within Helen's Bay, Watson said, there existed a “quiet social pressure to conform.”⁶⁹³ It was not a town that experienced a great deal of violence, as it was predominately Protestant and upper-middle class, and people rarely left the community for anything other than shopping. Watson insisted, however, that this did not mean that the need for separation did not exist; it just was assumed and not talked about:

⁶⁹⁰ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 60.

⁶⁹¹ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 59.

⁶⁹² Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 69.

⁶⁹³ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 59-60.

People very much had their school and then left, they had their own areas and their own social circles. [Then] you have a question about mixed marriages. ‘We don’t want them mixing with those sort.’ That can be about class, just as much as it can be about religion, but the thing is that people won’t tell you about that one. [When discussing integrated schools] they’ll say, ‘Oh no, they don’t have a very good history department. No they don’t do French.’ Or ‘No, I don’t want to go to that school.’ But they won’t want to come out and be really obvious, but for some people it is about the fear that they would meet somebody and want to marry them. Then we would have mixed children and then where would we be? But those are the kind of things people don’t talk about.⁶⁹⁴

This tradition of silent acceptance in the Watson household was tested when Watson’s sister began a long-term relationship with a Catholic. This caused her father to think anew about mixed relationships. She recalled a conversation with her father about her sister’s boyfriend:

Then he [my father] would say one thing about something, and you would say, “Well what about J---?” And he would say, “Well that’s different.” And you would go, “How is that different?” “It’s different, he works at the bank.” He [my father] felt comfortable, he could place him, he was good at his job, so suddenly that made it all ok.⁶⁹⁵

This solidified a theory that Watson believed to be true in neighbourhoods like her own: that people cared less about the Catholic-Protestant element of individuals and more about class as a means of separation.⁶⁹⁶

Watson’s father was a banker and her mother worked extensively in the local community as a volunteer. Watson’s acceptance of difference was solidified by her mother’s work in this sector. Oftentimes she would return from school and find people in her home that

⁶⁹⁴ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 60 and 66.

⁶⁹⁵ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 61-2.

⁶⁹⁶ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 62.

were living with disabilities. Her mother used these opportunities to instill in her a way to see those with differences as interesting as opposed to strange.⁶⁹⁷

Watson's mother also petitioned for better facilities for the local secondary school, an action that was met with criticism. According to Watson, her mother could not stand to see the inequality that existed in the town, which drove her to these types of projects. Her mother also encouraged Watson to embrace her identity as that of Irish and Protestant and to understand that the two were not mutually exclusive. Watson embraced this idea of shared identity so much that she began working for the Integrated Education Fund. When it was time for her own son to go to school, she sent him to the integrated school as opposed to the grammar school in town. This decision, although hard, was important to Watson because she believed that it is far easier for youth to learn and accept difference than it is for adults. Her job within integrated education eventually led her to apply for and accept a position at Corrymeela. Watson's knowledge of Corrymeela was only second-hand at the time, as she had never participated in any of the Community's activities.

Watson's official title at Corrymeela is Fund-Raising Director, and like the title of leader and the centre director it is multi-faceted in nature. The core of her job is encouraging donors to share in the vision of Corrymeela financially. This task involves writing letters and learning what aspects of Corrymeela people might find personally interesting. She is also in charge of the "face" of Corrymeela and works on the official publication for the Community, the *Corrymeela Magazine*. Through this magazine she attempts to bring together the different dynamics of Corrymeela (volunteers, the Ballycastle centre, Belfast project workers, etc.) together to help create a unified vision for the Community. This often proves to be difficult, as the variety of members, volunteer, and staff offer such differing opinions on issues such as

⁶⁹⁷ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 62.

religion and especially the concept of reconciliation. She stated that often the connecting theme she observes between different groups in the Community is the way people interpret Ray Davey's original vision of the Community.⁶⁹⁸ She admitted that this could be a problematic trend in the future of the Community, as members may try to maintain a strictly Christian ethos while trying to operate as a publicly-funded charity.

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Watson spoke about her own background. She admitted that while growing up, there was an emphasis on converting people to the faith, and that since then her theology has turned towards a more outward, ethical standpoint. She now sees reconciliation as being part of this outward code of ethics, although she can see how the word itself is beginning to be a problem:

Reconciliation is in danger of becoming an overused word, where people don't know what it means anymore. And for some people who had been really, seriously damaged in terms of physical, mental, who am I to say to them, "You need to reconcile." Reconcile to what? And where's forgiveness in all that? And where's justice and fairness and apologising? So reconciliation is only part of the jigsaw, and actually there's a whole lot of other stuff that's got to happen before you can get to put the big R in the jigsaw at the end.⁶⁹⁹

On a Community level, she referenced the *Croi* as being the centre for theological learning and worship at Ballycastle. She said that at the *Croi*, people from both backgrounds were able to go and worship together, even if they previously had stopped going to church. The reason behind this, Watson believed, was because people were given the choice over whether or not to participate. It was not an enforced time of worship, and the space itself was purposefully bare and open, so as Watson put it, "you can choose to reject it."⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁸ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 83.

⁶⁹⁹ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 86.

⁷⁰⁰ Jo Watson, Interview by Author, 83.

Yvonne Naylor-Former Volunteer and School's Worker, Current Member, Belfast

Yvonne Naylor was born in 1953 in the city of Londonderry-Derry, Northern Ireland. Naylor grew up Church of Ireland, and lived in a predominately Protestant area of the city. Along with being a minority in a Catholic-dominated city, her father was from Dublin and held deep sympathies with the Nationalist movement although he would not have participated in Catholic civil rights events. So although both parents were Church of Ireland, their opinions were differed because of her father's background. This diversity, however, was rarely discussed in the household. Naylor remembered: "Actually [my] parents didn't say very much about it. They had their own political opinions; they didn't really express them particularly openly."⁷⁰¹

Despite Londonderry-Derry's large Catholic population, Naylor did not interact much with the "other" side during her early youth. Her family lived down the street from a Catholic chapel and she recalled noticing a neighbour getting ready for her first communion. Being a young girl at the time, she asked her mother when she would get to dress up, and her mother responded that she would have to wait until she was thirteen because this girl went to a different church. This was Naylor's first understanding of the diversity that existed between the two denominations. She would have never felt uncomfortable going to the local Catholic chapel, however, as her father often attended funerals and various services there.

Living in this mixed area of Londonderry-Derry suited the family, and Naylor was able to participate in cross-community ventures through her local primary and grammar schools. These events included debate and drama societies with the other four grammar schools in Londonderry-Derry. The Naylor family attended the local Church of Ireland congregation, but

⁷⁰¹ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 32.

she could not recall any cross-community opportunities sponsored by the church. She instead remembered her church being like her household – silent when it came to issues of civil rights or violence:

Well in those days people didn't talk, pretty much. "Whatever you say, say nothing" meant that politics tended to be discussed amongst your friendship groups. Assumptions were made about what "other" people would think and you decided whether or not the ground was safe enough before saying what you really thought.⁷⁰²

In contrast to the silent household, Naylor did experience the openly political declarations of the church. For example, on Easter the family attended Londonderry-Derry's St. Columba Cathedral, where the mix of politics and religion was evident in the display of a cannonball from the Siege of Derry.⁷⁰³

Going to school in the 1960s and 70s in Londonderry-Derry proved to be a turbulent experience for Naylor. She remembered in 1965 when the new university in Northern Ireland went to Coleraine as opposed to Londonderry-Derry. There was unrest in the community as rumours spread that the voting system had been manipulated. Naylor also recalled the beginning of the civil rights marches and how her siblings participation in these activities. This caused a slight rift in the family, especially after Bloody Sunday.⁷⁰⁴ On the day that Bloody Sunday occurred, Naylor was living in Belfast and attending QUB, but she soon heard of the events of the day. After many discussions within her household concerning the day, she found members of her family at odds over the details. She said:

⁷⁰² Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 33.

⁷⁰³ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 35.

⁷⁰⁴ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 107.

I mentioned Bloody Sunday because looking back now there was also a division around the Widgery Tribunal and the findings of that, but that's where politics and religion are very close. And the whole sectarianism thing is about the distorted relationships that come out of issues around religion and the negative mixing of religion and politics.⁷⁰⁵

It was during this time period at QUB that Naylor first came into contact with Corrymeela. She was an active member of the Church of Ireland centre at university, and through her participation she became involved in several cross-community projects from 1971-73. In 1973 she attended the British Council of Churches in Liverpool and it was there that she met the then-centre director of Corrymeela, Harold Good. Good encouraged her to go to Ballycastle and volunteer at the centre before the year was out. She agreed, and soon after she arrived home she stopped by the Corrymeela offices to ask if they needed help for that weekend. They told her they needed a cook for a youth group that was coming up to the centre, and she agreed to volunteer for the position.⁷⁰⁶

Corrymeela was very young when Naylor first began volunteering. At the start of her time there the centre looked very different than it does now and many of the groups she led were involved in the construction of the initial buildings. She described this time: "We just sang spirituals and passed bricks to one another, so you can imagine the community that there was in that, singing around the camp fire in the evening and just being really tired from all the physical, hard, physical work and the bonding that that brought."⁷⁰⁷

At the onset of the Troubles, volunteers became busy trying to retrieve youth out of areas of violence so they would not be recruited by the paramilitaries. Naylor noticed that the Corrymeela van was never harmed during these visits, even though cars in certain areas were

⁷⁰⁵ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 33.

⁷⁰⁶ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 37.

⁷⁰⁷ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 37.

always a target: “[The communities] didn’t feel threatened by it [Corrymeela], they trusted what was happening, they knew that the family and parents got a lot out of it and felt safe. People knew that it was a good place to go and meet people and learn things.”⁷⁰⁸ Naylor said she thought this time period of Corrymeela’s history was interesting, because it was loosely-structured, led by volunteers, the majority of whom were students: “We felt we were a part of something, we were making a difference.”⁷⁰⁹

After graduating from QUB, Naylor became a teacher and in 1995 she became the Community’s School’s Project Worker. To aid in her role as project worker, Naylor attended classes in youth work with YouthLink, a cross-community youth organisation in Northern Ireland. Naylor spent four years as School’s Project Worker, but after seventy residentials she felt the need to take a break. She returned to teaching, which she said offered her more structure than working at the centre. Naylor spent one year teaching and then moved to something completely different: a research project at the Irish School of Ecumenics. She spent the next seven years developing and writing programmes for youth that could be used in the school system in Northern Ireland. Today Naylor continues to work with churches and schools, specifically with the Council for the Curriculum of Examination and Assessment. She is currently writing a curriculum for P7 in connection with the “Mutual Respect and Understanding” course that is a requirement in the state schools.⁷¹⁰ Naylor is still a member of Corrymeela, and is frequently asked to do various duties at the centre. For example, she will be doing several weeks of special worship in the summer of 2009 because of a recent request by a couple of long-term volunteers who believed their spiritual life to be lacking as a result of living at the centre. This was not surprising to Naylor, who believes that the identity at Corrymeela is

⁷⁰⁸ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 38.

⁷⁰⁹ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 39.

⁷¹⁰ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 44.

in transition: “Corrymeela is a Christian Community, and the centre is owned by the Community, but-it was always to be an open village, a place open to people of all faiths and none.”⁷¹¹

Naylor insisted that this was not the end of the Christian legacy for Corrymeela, however, because despite the fact that many of the volunteers, project workers, and staff were not Christian, what connected them was the legacy of Ray Davey and those who first had the vision for the Community. Naylor said she hoped with her work in the summer of 2009 that she would be able to bring people on a faith journey by recalling the lives of the founders, and thus creating a connection between the Christian background of the place and those who are visiting. Naylor believes this will be an enjoyable experience for those of “all faiths and none,” as many who are not of the faith community are interested in the work of Ray Davey. Likewise, Naylor also believed the spirits of many of the founders were the very heart of the Community.

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Naylor explained that she viewed her Christianity as that of a faith journey. She said she knew now that the volunteer version of herself that first came to Corrymeela was not the same as the now older member. She found that she had become much more aware of relationships and felt called to be one who crossed boundaries, not just interdenominational ones but those that involve issues such interfaith, sexism, race, ageism, and the like.⁷¹² She saw her work at Corrymeela and beyond as being her witness and serving as her attempt to follow Jesus’ example. Despite not wearing her faith on her sleeve, Naylor insisted that she was always ready to explain her motivations to those who asked. Part of her Christianity, which is directly related to inter-denomination-inter-faith reconciliation, is her understanding that people of different

⁷¹¹ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 44.

⁷¹² Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 40.

denominations and faiths can come together under the umbrella of a unifying God and ask the hard questions. She explained that this was her vision of a reconciled future, a place where people can speak and tell their stories in a safe place, not necessarily a comfortable one, but a place where they will be supported. She saw this as being much akin to the ministry of Jesus: “Jesus was asking them [hard questions] all the time and that’s why I come back to the Gospel all the time, and the importance of listening to what Jesus was saying about our relationships with one another and with the natural world.”⁷¹³

Ciara McFarlane-Secondary School’s Project Worker, Belfast

Ciara McFarlane began her life in an area of Belfast called Ardoyne, but soon moved to the nearby neighbourhood of Legioniel. Both of these areas, while Catholic, were surrounded by pockets of Protestant neighbourhoods. McFarlane grew up Catholic in a household that consisted of her mother and father and three other siblings, of which she was the eldest. In addition to the presence of actual relatives in McFarlane’s life, there were those who lived on her street who also acted as guardians. It was a place where “everyone knew everyone.”⁷¹⁴

Despite the family-like nature of the neighbourhood, it had its moments of sadness. McFarlane explained that violence and death were a common theme while watching television news each night in her household, oftentimes involving people who lived in her area. She considers herself lucky that none of her immediate relatives were injured or killed in the Troubles, as she went to a primary school where she believed over half had a one-parent home.

⁷¹³ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 48.

⁷¹⁴ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 14.

Remembering her childhood, McFarlane recalled going through metal gates to get to the city centre, and having her bags checked at every shop before entering. When asked how all of these events affected her personally, she explained that it was normal life to her. Because it was all she had known, she did not know that it was strange or different from life elsewhere.⁷¹⁵

In primary and secondary school, McFarlane was involved in a number of local activities including participating in the youth orchestra, Irish dancing and the local Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). These activities rarely put her in contact on a personal level with any Protestants because of the separation of leisure centres, parks and sports. She stated that despite the school's effort to encourage cross-community discussions, she did not really know any Protestants until she was about sixteen years old and began working at a clothing shop in the city centre of Belfast. McFarlane explains that amidst this separation her parents did a good job of not imposing their political views on their children. What were expressed frequently, however, were concerns for their children's safety. She recalled her understanding of this at the time: "They [adults] always would have been worried about letting us go to certain places. So there is always this thing, that they would be after you, or they would be out to get you. Not so much as feelings or thoughts about individuals, but as a group you wouldn't be safe if you were to meet them."⁷¹⁶

In 1998, McFarlane attended the University of Ulster and completed a degree in Biochemistry. It was at the University that she began to befriend and live in the same community as Protestants. She explained that this academic setting was an important cross-community experience for her, even though it was not organised as such:

⁷¹⁵ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 17.

⁷¹⁶ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 15.

There was never any work done to make it like that, it was just you got on with people and they were your friends and that was that. Before I went to university, I did have some [Protestant] friends I met through work, but it might have been difficult to see them outside of that, because there wouldn't have been many areas that we could have went that were safe spaces. You would have been wary at going into someone else's area or them coming into yours.⁷¹⁷

After graduation, McFarlane became a science teacher at an integrated school in Belfast. She enjoyed the work there because of its emphasis on shared education, and when the position for a Secondary School Project Worker for Corrymeela was posted she thought it might be something she would enjoy. She applied for and got the job and has been working at Corrymeela for five years. McFarlane explained her position as being focused in three areas: school's work, day groups, and residentials at the Ballycastle centre. The school's work is a result of a new, mandatory curriculum in Northern Ireland state schools called "Citizenship and Learning for Life and Work." One of the main emphases in this curriculum is community relations, and part of her job is finding Protestant and Catholic schools to match up and bring together for projects and activities. These students also participate in the day groups and residentials at Ballycastle if further time together is desired.

McFarlane acknowledged that combining different schools from the local area into one residential was a difficult task, and not solely because of the inter-denominational element. Class issues came into play, such as when students who had grown up in turbulent areas would engage with other students who had experienced very little in terms of the Troubles. This difference meant that one aspect of McFarlane's job was to figure out if the students were ready for these types of cross-community activities. Oftentimes the students with whom she worked had to be prepared for these types of activities through means of "single identity"⁷¹⁸ work that

⁷¹⁷ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 18.

⁷¹⁸ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 18.

involved addressing a youth's own identity. This might have involved discussions about culture, community, fears, and concerns in order to bring them to a level that they might have meaningful interaction with someone from the "other" group. She explained:

So we want them to discuss their issues, and we want them to actually get involved in in-depth discussions, [but] the difficulties are there that they don't want to offend anyone, so they just will sit there and say, "Oh I love everyone, and I don't have problems with these people." But actually they do, and you can see that they do when you start going in deeper, but they won't share it.⁷¹⁹

Regarding the Christian nature of Corrymeela, McFarlane felt that it went deeper than just a religious stamp. She saw the centre as being important towards reconciliation from a very practical perspective, focusing on the importance of being taken out of one's natural space and coming to a neutral, safe area. McFarlane observed that a majority of her students' time was spent fighting to maintain territory through the use of flags, murals, and colours that distinguished one side from the other. At Corrymeela, she noticed that the youth were able to free themselves a bit from this need to claim something, and were able to share more openly because of the neutrality of the centre. McFarlane made the interesting point that the students were actually able to form groups amongst each other based on common interests, which is normal for most teenagers around the world, as opposed to religious, political, and geographical territory lines defining social groups. McFarlane noticed that this neutrality associated with Corrymeela went so far that, when visiting schools, she was rarely asked about her background, despite having a traditionally Irish name. She stated: "I guess a lot of them see Corrymeela as

⁷¹⁹ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 20.

being this neutral space and this neutral people who can come in and it doesn't matter who or what they are."⁷²⁰

When asked about her vision for a reconciled Northern Ireland, McFarlane said she wanted to encourage the population to be realistic. She believed there was so much rhetoric about peace and unity that there was a pressure for the two groups to become one identical community. She said she hoped that Protestants and Catholics would be able to maintain the ideas that make them unique, but that each would be able to appreciate and listen as opposed to respond aggressively. Even students who went up to the centre were not allowed to wear football colours, specifically Rangers and Celtics colours, so as to avoid fighting. While an understandable gesture, McFarlane wished that they would allow them to wear what they chose so as to encourage actual dialogue concerning their differences. Diversity was natural in a society, she explained, and people should be able to disagree, but with the past situation being so bad it had been deemed far easier to separate people and pretend that the "other" did not exist.

Interviewee's Historical and Theological Summary

[Reconciliation work] is always personal; there are always reasons why people get involved. And things which can be experiences or family dynamics. I think for me, I belonged and didn't belong to the society, is my feeling about it. For some people they go outside Northern Ireland and something new happens or they are the product of a mixed marriage or maybe mixed marriage and a generation removed, so there are reasons here.⁷²¹

⁷²⁰ Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author. 21.

⁷²¹ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 50.

In the interviews with those who worked and volunteer at Corrymeela there were a variety of theological and likewise social themes that emerged and it seemed that each person, as David Stevens stated above, had their own reason for being a part of the Community. There was a practicality about the discussions on theology and reconciliation in these interviews. The life of Jesus was referenced several times as being a representation of reconciliation in action. An emphasis on Christology also appeared in those interviewed who did not cite religion as being a motivating factor in their work at Corrymeela, but still enjoyed the ethics of the Christian faith. This idea of Jesus as an ethical and practical example of reconciliation seems to be a connecting theme among those interviewed, and little emphasis was given to the idea of the collective church except to criticise its lack of cross-community ventures. The views of the interviewees on reconciliation seemed often to be inspired by the corporate Corrymeela theology and specifically the ideas of Ray Davey, and at times it was difficult to distinguish what was a personal belief and that of the corporate mindset. Finding common theological themes amongst the interviewees was a bit more difficult, but there were five that seemed to occur more than the others: reconciliation as service and volunteering, reconciliation as safe and neutral space, reconciliation as story-telling and asking hard questions, and reconciliation as inclusiveness.

Reconciliation as service and volunteering was the first theme that emerged from the interviews. There was as strong emphasis on the importance of volunteering oneself for the sake of the Community at large. Several of those interviewed had been volunteering on a regular basis since an early age, though most of that service was not associated with Corrymeela. David Stevens sees volunteering as being the most successful venture of Corrymeela, without which the centre at Ballycastle would not be able to function. Those who claimed the importance of

service in the life of the Community see it as something that is fundamental to the Christian faith. According to Barth, a key aspect of the understanding of Jesus as a servant was His humbled nature.⁷²² Those interviewed discussed this idea, that to work at Corrymeela and to make people feel comfortable, one has to put a bit of themselves aside, despite what they might think or feel. They are servants in their work, friends to all, in order to create a situation where people feel able to discuss issues freely. David Stevens adds:

All things find their unity in Christ. But paradoxically, He is the Lord who is the servant so we can only understand this Lordship as we are turned around rediscover one another in mutual service as brothers and sisters in God's family. Only a rediscovery of the servant Lordship of Christ and the depth of His healing love can unite us and free us to create the new structures which are necessary for a new society.⁷²³

This theme offered insights into the way that those working at the centre viewed repentance and forgiveness. By acting as representatives of a reconciled community and likewise attempting to maintain a humbled example, those interviewed at Corrymeela seem to offer repentance and forgiveness amongst fellow members without any need for personal justice. Despite many of those interviewed growing up in violent and oppressive atmospheres because of the “other,” no one spoke of a need for personal satisfaction for past hurts. Many who were the victims of violence, instead, admitted to feeling regret for adding to the division at some points in their own history through personal bias.

The second theme is reconciliation as a safe and neutral space. A vision of Ray Davey's that existed from the very beginning was the hope that Corrymeela could serve as a safe and neutral space for people who desired one. The interviewees, especially those who worked with

⁷²² Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 95.

⁷²³ Stevens, *The Place Called Reconciliation*, 10.

youth, recall the pressures that some young people have in their life as a result of living in certain areas of Northern Ireland. This pressure revolves around the need to create a territory that is “theirs” against that of the “other,” and thus the amount of time that goes into painting kerbs and murals or figuring out what colours to wear is consuming for many young people. The marking of territory goes so far as the churches, where two of the interviewees remembered political propaganda as decoration in their churches. Many of those who were interviewed grew up as minorities in these territorial areas, and their stories show the stress that can exist for those who are caught in this tribalistic scenario. The idea, therefore, of a place where people can come and leave those types of worries and stresses behind is an important part of the beliefs of those working at Corrymeela. This vision goes all the way back to the beginning of Corrymeela as described by John Morrow:

Corrymeela sought to reflect that biblical and Iona sense of the “word made flesh” by rooting its life and work in a shared common life, open to all who were willing to join us on a new ecumenical journey of faith; open also to those who were skeptical, disillusioned with their past experience of the church and to those who were victims of injustices, discrimination, intimidation and fear in our society.⁷²⁴

This “shared common life” means that those working at the Community are required to create a neutral space, not only at the centre, but also within themselves. Those interviewed discussed the difficulties surrounding this, as almost all said that the one thing they had learned about themselves from working at the Community was the bias that they held unknowingly. Though, again, the concept of forgiveness was not mentioned outright, it was hinted at in the discussions concerning the need to understand oneself in order to work in the field of reconciliation. Those who alluded to these concept of forgiveness discussed how they had to search within

⁷²⁴ Morrow, *Journey of Hope*, 15-6.

themselves for any repressed anger towards the “other” that would require forgiveness in order to maintain the safe atmosphere of Corrymeela.

The third category of themes, which both fall under the category of safe spaces, is reconciliation as creating a place for telling one’s story and also asking hard questions. As is common in Northern Ireland, several of the people who were interviewed grew up in households where the surrounding violent events were viewed as normal and not questioned or discussed. Those who were minorities in their neighbourhoods or from mixed marriages felt the need to suppress their identity in order to fit into an unsafe place. Corrymeela’s goal of creating a safe space so that stories could be told seemed to be important to all those who were interviewed. David Stevens says he is proud of his Presbyterian tradition that is known for asking awkward questions and Ronnie Millar said that the hardest part of working with groups at Corrymeela was when people resorted to politeness. Yvonne Naylor, in her interview, said her vision of reconciliation involved people asking these hard questions because that is what Jesus did on a regular basis. This feeling of freedom to speak one’s mind is seen by some as a luxury in Northern Ireland, and not a reality for many of those interviewed who grew up in places where they had to maintain their “belonging” by agreeing with the status quo despite their personal beliefs.

While all of these aspects mentioned can be connected to a very praxis-based theology of reconciliation, they all seem more practical than theological. Likewise, all the interviewees seemed to have similar views on the themes mentioned. The exception to both of these observations is the final theme: reconciliation as inclusiveness. The commonality that existed between most of the interviewees was a feeling of exclusion at some point in their lives. This was often the case because of being a minority in a rural community or living in a mixed

marriage, but the interviews showed that growing up there was a sense of “belonging and not belonging” that existed for each person interviewed. This was why many of them were attracted to the idea of Corrymeela, and why many have chosen to make inclusion their lives’ work. This idea of inclusion goes beyond just the practical aspects mentioned above, however, as each interviewee has had to decide what this means for their theological beliefs. Yvonne Naylor describes how working at Corrymeela has influenced her thoughts on faith: “I learned a lot more about faith in a wider sense in terms of relationships, and not just inter-denominational, but also an interfaith understanding about God.”⁷²⁵ This is a thought that is shared by many of those interviewed who hold a seemingly religiously pluralistic view on theology. There are voices of opposition to this level of inclusiveness, however, David Stevens offered:

I think now these sorts of issues of how we understand faith and Christ and so on are becoming more complicated. And we are obviously in sort of an interfaith world, or at least issues of the awareness of other faiths here becomes more obvious. Should they not be part of the Community? I think some people have a problem with particularity. The one thing they can’t cope with in the world is particularity and you get some of those at Corrymeela. We are all for inclusion, but actually you can’t be a totally inclusive group of people. So how do we deal with particularity?⁷²⁶

This idea of inclusiveness is the point of contention in the Community at the moment. There seems to be three current ways of handling this situation at Corrymeela based on those interviewed and observed: 1. Reconciliation means holding on to the Christian nature of the Community completely (this view seems to be held by a majority of members and Friends), 2. Reconciliation means being simple and vague about the Christian nature of the centre in order to attempt to include everyone, but the Community will still remain Christian (the practical way

⁷²⁵ Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 40.

⁷²⁶ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 57.

in which the centre and the offices are executed now), 3. Reconciliation is complete inclusiveness, and should not mean giving up one's personal beliefs or lack thereof despite the historical Christian nature of the Community (a view held by some within all categories of the Community).

The Corrymeela Community has a long history in the realm of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Throughout this history, members of the Community have attempted to define what the theology of reconciliation means, with often differing results. Despite this diversity, the Community has been able to come together as a group to create what is now the largest, and most financially successful, of all the reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland. Their success, undoubtedly, is based on the inspiring message of Ray Davey, to which all of those interviewed showed an immense respect and admiration for. It is under Davey's leadership and vision that the Community will seemingly continue to flourish. It will, however, be forced in the coming years to evaluate what Davey's vision means for an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland context.

We move now to our second case study, the Cornerstone Community. The practical differences between Cornerstone and Corrymeela are numerous, but it will certainly be beneficial to see how two Communities, based on the idea of reconciliation, existing in Northern Ireland, live out their faith in differing ways.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY

Introduction

According to Maria Power, by the 1980s, those working towards ecumenical dialogue within the local churches of Northern Ireland were becoming increasingly discouraged. Resources were slim for such work, as many local churches refused to fund ecumenical endeavours. Therefore, despite the continued presence of the two “Early Pioneer” ecumenical communities in Northern Ireland, Corrymeela and The Christian Renewal Centre, there was an increasing need for reconciliation initiatives in the inner city. Power describes this situation:

Through their work, Corrymeela and the Christian Renewal Centre demonstrated the value of providing a place to which people could retreat from the pressures of living in an area of ongoing conflict. However, in 1980 it was becoming obvious that retreat and removal from everyday life was not going to be effective for everyone and that some form of work within the community needed to be undertaken.⁷²⁷

The need for a reconciling presence within conflicted areas led to the creation of several Communities within highly contested areas of both Belfast and Derry. From the period of 1977-92, five new ecumenical communities developed: The Lamb of God Community (1977, North Belfast), The Columba Community (1981, Derry), The Cornerstone Community (1982, West Belfast), The Columbanus Community of Reconciliation (1983, North Belfast), and The Currach Community (1992, West Belfast).⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 136.

⁷²⁸ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 137.

Size, as well as location, set these Communities apart from Corrymeela and The Christian Renewal Centre. These inner-city Communities operate with far fewer people than their predecessors and their locations are some of the most deprived and segregated areas of their respective cities, and likewise usually the most violent. They are placed on “peacelines,” or artificial dividing lines between two contentious neighbourhoods. These peacelines can be described as the front line in many of the violent episodes that have occurred and continue to occur throughout Belfast and Derry. Power further explains: “It was in this atmosphere of violence and deprivation that the peaceline ecumenical communities were founded in order to promote a model of Christian reconciliation and living.”⁷²⁹

Because many of these ecumenical communities were created in a similar time frame and are located in similar locations, there are parallels in their developments as Communities. One such similarity is that they all began with ecumenical prayer meetings that eventually led to the creation of their respective Communities.⁷³⁰ Another similarity exists in each of the Communities’ visions and aims. The majority of the peaceline communities have focused on the spiritual element, as opposed to the programme-based versions of reconciliation. Even through the most violent episodes in their respective histories, this spiritual element has remained the main priority in each of the Communities’ visions. Finally, found amongst these Communities is the common desire to focus on the local community, as opposed to the ideas of their forbearers, whose goal was removing persons from their local contexts to a more neutral area. To avoid this practice of removal, the peaceline communities have committed their physical spaces as neutral and safe for both Protestants and Catholics.

⁷²⁹ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 137.

⁷³⁰ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 138.

The Cornerstone Community, one example of a peaceline community, is the second case study that will be examined in this research project. The goal of the following sections is to create a comprehensive account of the Cornerstone Community, as told by members, volunteers, leaders, and Community publications, in order to better place its presence within the current study on the theology of reconciliation in the context of Northern Ireland. This summary will include a history of the Cornerstone Community from its conception to the present, indicating key points in the history of Northern Ireland where the social context influenced the development of the Community both structurally and theologically. The next sections will include the personal histories and theological beliefs of certain Community members and staff in order to show where Cornerstone is in the present-day situation. The same approach of examining key developments, both historically and theologically, in the individual's life will be applied, with a special emphasis on the unique aspects of living in Northern Ireland, in order to gain insight into the background and beliefs of the current Community members, workers, and volunteers.

The Cornerstone Community Corporate History

The Inspiration for the Cornerstone Community

The inspiration for the Cornerstone Community began with a faith-based residential, sponsored by The Christian Life Communities, that was held in Larne, Northern Ireland on 3 December 1977. Bill Jackson, a founder of Cornerstone, described the Christian Life Communities (CLC): “[CLC] were small groups of about eight Catholics who met regularly to

deepen their Christian lives together.”⁷³¹ Sam Burch, also a founding Cornerstone member, added: “These were little groups, really like the original Methodist class meetings that would’ve been there to encourage a more lively faith, a more active faith. And they were led by Sr. Mary Grant. She was secretary at the time.”⁷³²

The particular residential where many of the founding members of Cornerstone first met consisted of around sixty participants from the Christian Life Communities in both Dublin and Belfast, and was organised by Sr. Mary Grant. Along with members of the CLC, Grant desired a representation from the Protestant community to participate alongside the exclusively Catholic CLC group. She specifically invited Bill Jackson, a well-known figure in the Shankill area of Belfast, and requested that he bring as many representatives from his congregation and the surrounding area, as possible.⁷³³ Jackson was enthusiastic about the idea of a combined retreat, and encouraged members of his congregation to attend. This push from Jackson resulted in the participation of twenty Protestants, from both the Methodist and Presbyterian churches.⁷³⁴

At the residential, the participants were divided into smaller, combined groups of Catholics and Protestants. Once in these groups, they were each asked two questions: What is your favourite Bible verse? and Why did you come to this residential? As the groups explored these two questions they found shared interests and opinions. According to Jackson: “Suddenly they [the Protestant participants] were presented in no uncertain matter with a new face, which was startling. There were Roman Catholics here who really knew the Lord Jesus, and had put

⁷³¹ Bill Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade: The Beginnings of the Cornerstone Community*. (Belfast: Cornerstone Community, undated), 1.

⁷³² Sam Burch quoted in Henri Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Groups in Northern Ireland 1960-2002” (PhD diss., Queen’s University, Belfast, 2002), 136.

⁷³³ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 1.

⁷³⁴ Henri Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Groups in Northern Ireland 1960-2002” (PhD diss., Queen’s University, Belfast, 2002), 136.

their lives in His hands!”⁷³⁵ When the conference ended, it was deemed a great success, with both parties confident about their newly established relationships and the possibilities that existed for future cross-community endeavours.

Out of the retreat, friendships emerged that crossed the denominational line. In July 1978, Bill Jackson again returned to a CLC conference that was held in Clongowes, near Dublin. He was joined by two friends, Marie Crawford and Isaac Smith, both of whom were members of local Methodist churches. This meeting was similar to that of the previous residential and consisted mostly of small group discussions and prayer. It was during these small group sessions that Jackson reflected: “As time went by, we came to have a deep affection for each other.”⁷³⁶ The conference was, again, a great success and it inspired those who had participated to begin meeting together on a more frequent basis.

Later that year, feeling encouraged by the success of both the meetings and the desire of the participants to meet again, Sr. Mary Grant organized a fortnightly cross-community meeting at Clonard Monastery in Belfast. These meetings were multifaceted in nature and ranged from studying the Eucharist to exploring spiritual exercises, but always involved praying together in friendship and community.⁷³⁷ Isabel Hunter, a founding member of Cornerstone, joined the group at this time. She said:

So I joined it, when I joined they were studying the Eucharist. And I came to realise, very deeply, that I had not thought much about it before. That the Eucharist was there for everyone, not only for Protestant, but Protestant and Catholic together took the same bread and the same blood of Christ and were one in Christ.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 1.

⁷³⁶ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 2.

⁷³⁷ Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Communities in Northern Ireland,” 136-7.

⁷³⁸ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 45.

The Community that was formed through these meetings became known as the Clonard Group, and served as a means for members of the Catholic and Protestant communities in the Shankill and Falls areas to learn more about one another in a safe environment.

Although the group continued to meet together through the traumatic episodes of the Troubles, it was the hunger strikes of the 1980s that truly tested the friendship of its members. Despite the regular meetings of the Clonard Group, the individual members were encouraged to remain faithful to their respective churches. As conflict ensued, however, some of these churches were determined to maintain an impenetrable denominational line. Sam Burch, a former leader of Cornerstone and founding member, said: “The churches seemed powerless, utterly powerless to do anything, [be]cause they’d become tribal churches. I mean they ministered to their own tribe, but couldn’t do anything about inter-tribal warfare, except bury their own dead and comfort their own widows.”⁷³⁹

During this traumatic time period, many of the Clonard Group’s individual congregations used Christian doctrine as a means to divide. This influence began to trickle into the meetings at Clonard and opinions became increasingly divided over the acts of the young men in the Maze prison. Some of the Protestants in the Clonard Group saw it as a sin to commit suicide for any reason, especially political gain. Some of the Catholics in the group saw it as a heroic sacrifice, even if they did not necessarily believe in the political aspect of the Republican message.⁷⁴⁰

With the continued hunger strikes and the violence in the Shankill-Falls area increasing, it became apparent to many of the members of the Clonard group that something radical had to be done outside the walls of the local churches. Burch said of the time:

⁷³⁹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 10.

⁷⁴⁰ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 2-3.

I remember coming up through the Grosvenor Road past all these guys with the coffins with the names of the ones who had died and the ones who were on hunger strike. There was a whole campaign which was the Provos [Provisional IRA] saying, “This is a legitimate war, a legitimate fight, and these are legitimate freedom fighters and they’re not to be regarded as ordinary criminals.” But that was the whole protest that went on and on, and so many of them died. That was a very difficult period and by then we decided to do something more than pray.⁷⁴¹

Despite the precarious times, the Clonard Group still continued to meet together, but the desire to do more for the Community continued to be a key issue in the meetings. It was during this time that Bill Jackson wrote a letter to Sr. Mary Grant, who was studying in America at the time that stated his desire to develop the Clonard group into something more than just a casual gathering of people. He wrote, “I think we should begin to consider more specifically how we are to bear witness to our Lord together in our situation. Should we not be taking some kind of public stand, or doing some service for him together?”⁷⁴² This evolution of the group should not be a hasty decision, Jackson believed, especially in their current political situation, “Any such public stand would require a deep, unshakeable conviction that we are at one in Him, for it would clearly mean facing criticism and misunderstanding, if nothing worse.”⁷⁴³

Around this same time period Isabel Hunter, a member of the Clonard Group, began to feel that she was being given prophetic messages through scripture. These messages seemed, according to Hunter, to be telling her that the Clonard Group needed to be playing a more direct role in the work of reconciliation in the local area. She told Jackson about these messages and the pair decided to share them with their mutual congregation at the Shankill Mission. Hunter’s

⁷⁴¹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author by author, 11.

⁷⁴² Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 3.

⁷⁴³ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 3.

revelations were greeted with minimal enthusiasm, and continued to remain only a hopeful possibility in the minds of those in the Clonard Group.⁷⁴⁴

In September 1981, the evangelist Dennis Patterson came to The Shankill Mission for a week of evangelical services. Patterson was a strong advocate of reconciliation among Catholic and Protestant groups in Northern Ireland. At his meetings he would always call for a commitment from the congregation to the work of reconciliation in their local area. Many of those in the Shankill Mission, still pondering the words of Hunter, committed themselves to reconciliation. After Patterson took leave of the congregation, Jackson wrote the following to him in a letter:

The Clonard group heard us [Hunter and Jackson] in silence and with great concentration, and when we had finished there was a wonderful general acceptance that the Lord was at work. Later at that meeting, as we talked together, we came to feel that the Lord might wish to set up a community of Christians both Catholic and Protestant somewhere on the peaceline between the two communities. Humanly speaking, we know that this is madness, and like Gideon in my weakness, I would need many proofs, I feel, before I could take part in such a thing.⁷⁴⁵

By April 1982, inspired by the words of Patterson and the message from Hunter, a separate group had formed from within the Clonard Group. This new group believed that the idea of a community in the interface area was viable, and they began to gather on alternating Wednesdays at Hunter's home to discuss plans. One of the first orders of business was to set up a series of aspirations for the future Community. Two aims were decided upon in these initial meetings: "To give witness that people from different religious and political traditions could

⁷⁴⁴ Fisher, "An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Communities in Northern Ireland," 137-8.

⁷⁴⁵ Jackson, *Crossing the Barricade*, 3.

live and work in peace and harmony and to pray for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.”⁷⁴⁶

After many weeks of planning, it was decided by the group that a name was needed for their future project. Naming the Community proved difficult, and many different ideas were discussed until “Cornerstone” was suggested. The idea for this name was based on Ephesians 2:19-20, which reads: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”⁷⁴⁷ This verse seemed to perfectly reflect the aspirations of the future Community, and thus the name was voted on and passed.

The plans for the new Community were set, but a key issue that remained was the means of finding an established location to reside. The answer came, again, through the help of Dennis Patterson, who gave the group’s plan to Sir Cyril Black, a Christian philanthropist and former member of Westminster. Patterson explained to Black the plan to build the reconciliation community in the Shankill-Falls area. Black recognised the need for ecumenical communities in these conflicted areas, and he thereby agreed to buy two semi-detached houses that were located on the interface between the Ballymurphy (Republican) and Highfield (Loyalist) estates.⁷⁴⁸ Sam Burch elaborated on this interaction:

⁷⁴⁶ The Cornerstone Community, *A Brief History of Cornerstone Community* (Belfast: Cornerstone Community, undated), 1.

⁷⁴⁷ The Cornerstone Community, *A Brief History of Cornerstone Community*, 1.

⁷⁴⁸ Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Communities in Northern Ireland,” 138.

This was Cyril Black, a Baptist, conservative member of Parliament, Westminster, who had been very successful in business and had set up his own trust, and was doing good works all over the world, in South Africa, America and various places. He came over and said, “Well I will buy you houses.” And we said, “Wait a minute, we haven’t sorted ourselves out. We haven’t got a constitution yet.” So we had to wait and draw up a constitution. But he bought two houses and gave us the money to do them up, and that’s Cornerstone.⁷⁴⁹

Black bought the property and houses for the Community on 18 December 1982, and on 22 December the planning group came together to consecrate the houses for the work of reconciliation. Father Brenden, a local Jesuit priest, sprinkled Holy water into the rooms of the homes, and individual members read scriptures. These proceedings were followed by a prayer session, which included each of the members of the newly formed Community taking communion with one another. This concluded the consecration of the house, and began the legacy of Cornerstone as a reconciliation community.⁷⁵⁰

Cornerstone Beginnings

On 28 December 1982 the first residents, Sr. Mary Grant, Sr. Gladys Hayward, and Hazel Dickson, a Methodist school teacher, moved into the houses on the Springfield Road.⁷⁵¹ Cornerstone was first set up in a style similar to its predecessors, with one leader and various Community members, but from the beginning the group tried to maintain a relaxed style when it came to membership requirements and meetings. The programme within the house was basic: a prayer meeting on Wednesday of each week where concerns about the Community, the local

⁷⁴⁹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 11.

⁷⁵⁰ Jackson, “Crossing the Barricade,” 4.

⁷⁵¹ Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Communities in Northern Ireland,” 138.

area, and one another were addressed and discussed. Some members lived in the house⁷⁵² while others were detached but still attended meetings. Prayer took place at noon and five in the evening each day for whoever might want to participate and outside those hours the house was always open to Bible studies, prayer groups, or even political meetings, as long as it served as a benefit to the community.

When Cornerstone first began there was some debate as to how much outreach to the local community there would be, as their decision to be primarily a praying Community was suggested by one member of the founding group and accepted almost immediately. When prompted to consider what their ambition might be in the local community, they came up with a set of ideas. Their initial aim was as follows: “Prayer is at the heart and foundation of Cornerstone. Being is important to us. We want to be a people of prayer and witness to God’s reconciling love.”⁷⁵³ During the early 1980s, when the Community was just beginning, this vision stayed with the group, but in the late eighties there was a desire by some members to do practical work in the area of reconciliation, and thus extend the ideals of Cornerstone into the local community.

The inspiration for Cornerstone to begin outreach initiatives began with the work of Fr. Gerry Reynolds, a priest who worked extensively with the local community through Clonard Monastery. In 1985 Reynolds heard about the death of Dennis Taggart, a part-time UDR soldier who had been shot outside his home in the Shankill area. Reynolds wanted to comfort the family and friends of the man and so he called Sam Burch, Ken Newell, and Timothy Kinahan, all Protestant ministers, and asked if they would be willing to go and visit the family of the deceased with him. Although hesitant, the men agreed, and were received into the house of the

⁷⁵² The two houses were converted into one house at 444-445 Springfield Road shortly after they were purchased.

⁷⁵³ The Cornerstone Community quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 149.

bereaved family. As Ronald Wells, stated: “It occurred to Ken, Gerry and Sam Burch that, as clergy, they were in a kind of privileged position, in that it was not unnatural for them to minister to, and console, families of those killed in sectarian violence, even if not members of their own congregations.”⁷⁵⁴ This occasion began a series of visits of around fifty homes by the ministers throughout the Troubles.⁷⁵⁵

These cross-community visits also inspired many lay members of the Cornerstone Community, and it became common for members to show support at funerals in the local area. Ultimately this style of visiting encouraged the creation of the Unity Pilgrims,⁷⁵⁶ a group of Catholics from Cornerstone who would go to Mass each Sunday and then worship elsewhere in a different Protestant church. This is overwhelmingly agreed by most members to be the most successful of Cornerstone’s projects.

By the late 1980s, however, there was a split amongst the members of Cornerstone concerning the increase in proposed outreach projects. Some members felt as though too much outreach would take away the primary focus of the Community as a praying presence. Others felt as though doing work in the local community was vital. The split created a new group outside of Cornerstone, Lifespring, which focused on youth programmes and was led by Cornerstone founder, Sr. Mary Grant.⁷⁵⁷

In 1990, maintaining a desire to prevent future splits, it was decided by the Community that a project worker position should be established within Cornerstone. This decision marked a clear shift in the Community towards a more outward-focused model that involved setting up

⁷⁵⁴ Ronald A. Wells, *Friendship Towards Peace: The Journey of Ken Newell and Gerry Reynolds* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2005), 80.

⁷⁵⁵ Fisher, “An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Groups in Northern Ireland,” 140-1.

⁷⁵⁶ Many members of the Unity Pilgrims are also apart of another project that involves both Reynolds and the minister Ken Newell, the Clonard-Fitzroy Fellowship. This is a cross-church fellowship that exists between Clonard and Fitzroy Presbyterian Church.

⁷⁵⁷ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

meetings with political groups and paramilitaries, annual events such as the Good Friday Falls-Shankill Walk and a cross-community St. Patrick's Day celebration. There was also the establishment of a Cornerstone Community lunch where residents of the Shankill-Falls area met to discuss local concerns. This lunch proved to be successful, as the Cornerstone newsletter stated: "The community lunch continues to be a great vehicle for bringing representatives from the local community groups, churches, schools, businesses, and PSNI together."⁷⁵⁸

As the peace process began, funding for reconciliation projects such as Cornerstone began to shift towards government-run initiatives. This created a need for Cornerstone to become more rigid in its financial dealings and its membership in order to reach the requirements for funding. This required people in the Community to have official positions of authority, for their roles to be made clear, and for general membership requirements to be more stringent. With all the new regulations required, Cornerstone began discussing ways to best utilise its limited assets. These discussions led to collaborations with other reconciliation communities in the local area, such as the Currach Community. It was through this collaboration that the development of the Forthspring Inter-Community Group occurred.⁷⁵⁹

The Forthspring Inter-Community Group

Despite opening in 1997, Forthspring's beginnings date back to the 1950s when the Springfield Road was a predominately affluent, Protestant area of Belfast. A minister who worked out of the Sandy Row area at that time came upon an empty spot on the Springfield Road that he thought would be a perfect place for a new Methodist church. This minister was

⁷⁵⁸ The Cornerstone Community, "Small Steps Forward," *Cornerstone Contact*, March 2006, 3.

⁷⁵⁹ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 150-1.

able to raise the funds from the surrounding area and the church was built, but with the onset of the Troubles the demographics of the area began to change drastically. The neighbourhood went from Protestant to mixed Protestant and Catholic to predominately Catholic and with this change came the inevitable decline in numbers in the church.⁷⁶⁰

This decline continued well into the 1980s and early 90s when a new minister took over the position at the Springfield Methodist church, Rev. Sydney Callaghan. Callaghan believed that the church was sitting in the perfect position to be a cross-community ministry that would benefit both sides of the divide. He had visions for a post office and shops on the site that could be utilised by both communities, hence bridging the gap between their respective areas. Callaghan spoke with his congregation about such plans, but the response was negative and by 1992 Callaghan had been moved from his position at Springfield Methodist to a different congregation.⁷⁶¹

His replacement was Rev. Gary Mason, who carried on the ideas of Callaghan and felt that the church should open itself up to the local community. The congregation remained firm against this idea, but eventually consented because of their dying numbers. Mason stated that he felt the church “[was] in the midst of a conflict situation [and it] needed to get its hands dirty.”⁷⁶² Springfield Methodist joined forces with three groups in their endeavour to create a community centre: Cornerstone Community, Currach Community, and the Mid-Springfield Community Association (MISCA). The front half of the church was converted into halls, a kitchen, meeting rooms, and offices, and the middle area remained a place for worship. On 17

⁷⁶⁰ Johnston Price, Interview by Author, 1.

⁷⁶¹ Johnston Price, Interview by Author, 1.

⁷⁶² Rev. Gary Mason quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 85.

October 1997, Forthspring officially opened to the public with weekly programmes for children, youth, and adults.⁷⁶³

Post-Peace Process

After the retirement of then-leader Tom Hannon in the summer of 2001, Cornerstone decided to switch to a community model of organisation as opposed to having one leader. This method was adopted with the hope that responsibilities would be spread throughout the Community. Bridie Twomey, a member of the Community, became the development officer for the endeavour, and she helped organise a team model that would help to spread out the leadership roles into six different areas. The teams were: Core, Prayer and Spirituality, House, Churches and Inclusion, “Sharing the Dream,” and Resource. The Core team consisted of four members who were overseers to the new team model in the Community. The Prayer and Spirituality team looked at how the group was using prayer as a ministry to the wider community. The House team’s focus was hospitality and how to make the house more available and beneficial to the local people. The Churches and Inclusion team was set up to continue to try and bridge the gap between the Community and the local churches and also to try and raise awareness of the different cultures that exist in Northern Ireland. The “Sharing the Dream” team worked on the newsletters, talks, workshops, and bringing in new members, and the Resource team was in charge of finances.⁷⁶⁴

On 26 May 2004 Cornerstone was awarded the “Cross of Nails” from Coventry Cathedral’s International Centre for Reconciliation. The ceremony took place in the Springfield

⁷⁶³ Johnston Price, Interview by Author, 2.

⁷⁶⁴ Bridie Cotter, “Traveling Onwards,” *Cornerstone Contact*, December 2001, 3.

Road Methodist Church, located inside the Forthspring building, and was led by the Reverend David Campton. Created after the devastating bombing of Coventry Cathedral on 14 November 1940, the award is given to individuals and organisations who have dedicated their resources to reconciliation. Membership in the Cross of Nails Community is shared with groups around the world, and it served as an important milestone for the Cornerstone Community.⁷⁶⁵

By 2005, the community model was fully developed and creating opportunities for reconciliation projects both within and outside Cornerstone. While Forthspring continued to aid the local community, especially in the area of after-school programmes, the Springfield house itself housed over one hundred visitors from five continents in one year. Twice in the year these visitors included students from Lagan College, the first integrated school in Northern Ireland. The Mission Team, one of the divisions first created under the community model, also continued to hold events throughout this year. These events included a Good Friday Prayer Walk that encircled the Shankill-Falls peaceline and a monthly Community Lunch. Members of Cornerstone also began to connect with local inter-faith organisations such as the Inter-faith forum and the Council of Christians and Jews.⁷⁶⁶ With new initiatives came new aims the Cornerstone Community, and in 2005 they expanded their vision:

- The Cornerstone Community - Servant of God's reconciling grace in the Shankill and the Falls;
- The Cornerstone Vision - The people of the Shankill and of the Falls belong to one another in the family of God;
- The Cornerstone Goal - To enable the people of the Shankill and the Falls to discover the bonds that unite them and to respect their differences that arise from tradition and culture.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁵ The Cornerstone Community, "The Cross of Nails," *Cornerstone Contact*, June 2004, 1-2.

⁷⁶⁶ The Cornerstone Community, "Team Reports," *Cornerstone Contact*, June 2005, 2-5.

⁷⁶⁷ A Cornerstone Information Leaflet quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 150.

In 2007 the Cornerstone Community brought in an outside advisor to mentor the group on the changing situation in Northern Ireland and on what role Cornerstone could play in their local area. The Cornerstone newsletter stated: “So many changes have taken place in various fields in Northern Ireland, in politics, in churches, and in the life style of people general since we hung up our shingle on the Springfield Road some twenty-four years ago, that we felt it was time to have a fresh look at ourselves.”⁷⁶⁸ These meetings gave way to a new mission statement for Cornerstone: “Cornerstone is an inter-church community of reconciliation based in North and West Belfast seeking through witness, prayer, outreach and hospitality to be a healing presence and a sign of hope.”⁷⁶⁹

Through the various meetings that the mentor held with the group, it was decided that Cornerstone should apply for funding from the International Fund for Ireland for a new project that would focus on understanding exactly who was living in their surrounding area. The result was a two-year outreach project titled “A Time for Reconciliation.”⁷⁷⁰ The aims of the project looked,

To develop new relationships and increased mobility across sectarian interfaces, to organise public reconciliation events that both reflect on the past and promote integration and reconciliation for a shared future, to support the churches to build new relationships with each other and to engage in practical community reconciliation and to examine and shape the future role of Cornerstone in a post conflict society.⁷⁷¹

Included in the funding for this project was the hiring of a full-time Reconciliation Project Officer, who would organise and implement the above aims in a practical form. This project had many facets, but there were two main emphases included: bringing families from both sides of

⁷⁶⁸ The Cornerstone Community, “The Way Forward,” *Cornerstone Contact*, March 2007, 2-3.

⁷⁶⁹ The Cornerstone Community, “The Way Forward,” 2.

⁷⁷⁰ The Cornerstone Community, “A Time for Reconciliation,” *Cornerstone Contact*, March 2008, 4-5.

⁷⁷¹ The Cornerstone Community, “A Time for Reconciliation,” 4-5.

the divide together at the Springfield Road house for dinners, and through these new relationships becoming better connected with the churches in the Shankill and Falls area.⁷⁷²

Sam Bright, the current live-in volunteer Heiner Heizmann, and the employed project worker Paul Twomey were in charge of the project. Bright explained:

[The] Time for Reconciliation was a project that Cornerstone thought up and it was really a dream of things they wanted to do and it got the funding to do it. So the part that I would have been involved in was the family part of the project. And that was bringing one family from the Catholic side, one family from the Protestant side together to a safe place to have a meal and to have a chat. That was the first part, and then the second part was each family will bring the other family to their home, and then the third part was they had to recommend two other families.⁷⁷³

As of March 2009, “The Time for Reconciliation Project” remained the major outreach project for the Cornerstone Community. In the yearly newsletter, the Community reflected on the progress of the project with optimism, and stated that those involved were working to get families that were willing to meet together from across the divide.⁷⁷⁴

A Corporate Historical and Theological Summary for Cornerstone

Henri Fisher, a PhD student at QUB who wrote his dissertation on reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland, states: “The reconciliation groups have positive visions for renewing society and the Christian community. These visions are generally shaped by their

⁷⁷² The Cornerstone Community, “A Time for Reconciliation, 4-5.

⁷⁷³ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 4.

⁷⁷⁴ The Cornerstone Community, “Time for Reconciliation Project,” *Cornerstone Contact*, March 2009, 4.

founders' theologies that are rooted in the Gospel of Christ."⁷⁷⁵ While this may stand as truth for Communities like Corrymeela, which had a definite founder in the form of Ray Davey, a starting ethos from Communities like Cornerstone that were founded by multiple members is not so easy to define. The publications of Cornerstone have shown only slight shifts from the initial vision, perhaps not so much in the theological realm, but in how that theology was used practically outside the Community.

Cornerstone was created in one of the most precarious times in the history of Northern Ireland. Perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of this time, the hunger strikes even threatened to break bonds between members the Clonard Group. Because of this reason, great lengths were taken to maintain what had brought the members of this ecumenical group together in the first place, relying on a prayer-based method of being. This is reflected in the first vision statement by the burgeoning Community: a praying Community that would hope for the eventual unity of the church. The theology of Cornerstone in these early years was centred on the power of prayer to help bring about the desires of God in the midst of the Troubles. The Cornerstone also believed that because of their ability to create this type of Community by praying and worshiping together, they might set an example for the outlying community and inspire the churches to participate in cross-community events.

It is hard to tell what exactly began the change in Cornerstone to an outward-focused Community, but it seems that slowly members began to participate in cross-community events outside of the houses that were placed under the name of Cornerstone. This seems to be an organic shift, as people went to where they felt they were needed, all the while under the Cornerstone banner. Maria Power offers: "Gradually the members of the Community became

⁷⁷⁵ Fisher, "An Examination of the Theology of Reconciliation as Taught and Practised by Reconciliation Groups in Northern Ireland," 202.

involved in prayer initiatives outside the house itself. Such schemes can be seen as tangible manifestations of the reconciling vision of Cornerstone.”⁷⁷⁶

Gerry Reynolds’s visits to bereaved families with Sam Burch and Ken Newell were some of the first instances of members participating in these activities. Reynolds understands Cornerstone to be a vital part of these past visits, and also to the current work of the Unity Pilgrims, because of the general cross-community acceptance of members of the Cornerstone Community on both sides of the divide.⁷⁷⁷ This increase in activities outside the walls of the Springfield Road house caused some people in the Community to question what Cornerstone was actually concerned with, being an inward prayer, presence, and reconciled example or an outward social, counselling, and political entity. A report by some members of the Cornerstone Community stated that the Community had lost its Christian background by working so heavily with the local community. “Much of the work is losing its Christian slant,” it stated.⁷⁷⁸ During the mid 1990s Cornerstone branched out further with this community aid initiative in the establishment of Forthspring Inter Community Group. It was with this development that, as Power explains, two different Cornerstones were created. One Cornerstone focused on the praying presence and the other on practical services provided to the community.⁷⁷⁹

With the addition of Bridie Cotter as Project Worker in 2001, the Community shifted still further from its original vision. The leader-members style set-up was shifted to teams. Two of these teams focused on the outward idea of reconciliation in the Community: churches and community outreach. Two teams focused on the inward aspects: prayer and spirituality and hospitality. By 2004, the *Cornerstone Contact* offered a new version of the original vision to

⁷⁷⁶ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 151.

⁷⁷⁷ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 57.

⁷⁷⁸ [No first names cited] Cary and Roulston quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 151.

⁷⁷⁹ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 151.

the public: “Cornerstone is a praying Community, all its work is prayer centred. The daily prayer of the Community, the weekly meeting and the monthly Bible study all have a central role in Community life. The work and activities of Cornerstone are prayer in action.”⁷⁸⁰

By 2007, the Community seemed to be at an impasse as to where they should go next with their ministry. They hired an outside mentor to form a strategy for their coming years. The public statement that was created from these meetings was, “Cornerstone is an inter-church Community of reconciliation based in North and West Belfast seeking through witness, prayer, outreach and hospitality to be a healing presence and a sign of hope.”⁷⁸¹ Again the focus seemed to shift to the inward Community; words like witness, prayer, hospitality, and presence are prominent in this vision.

One question that is brought up in the 2007 edition of the *Cornerstone Contact* is the following: “How can we as a Community claiming to witness to the reconciling love of Jesus facilitate this reconciliation in a practical way?”⁷⁸² This has seemed to be the question throughout the Cornerstone history when it comes to interpreting a clear theological stance. There are common themes that stay with Cornerstone throughout its history: reconciliation as prayer and presence in the local community. In terms of a praxis-centred theology of reconciliation, however, there is no clear indication of where the Community stands.

One way, perhaps, of gaining insight into the reasoning behind the unified stance on prayer and presence is an examination of those who are members of the Community. The following sections offer insight into what the Cornerstone of today actually looks like. This information is based primarily on interviews, fieldwork and current Community publications.

⁷⁸⁰ The Cornerstone Community “Prayer and Spirituality” *Cornerstone Contact*, June 2004, 3.

⁷⁸¹ The Cornerstone Community “The Way Forward,” 2.

⁷⁸² The Cornerstone Community “The Way Forward,” 3.

The Cornerstone Community Today

The Springfield Road House

The house on the Springfield Road, which was donated to the Community for the work of reconciliation, serves as the centre of the activities of Cornerstone. The house itself exists on the peaceline between the Woodvale (Protestant) and Springfield Road (Catholic) neighbourhoods in West Belfast. These two areas are the northern extension of the more well-known Shankill Road and Falls areas of the city. To walk around these neighbourhoods is to gain greater insight into the division. On the Falls, leading to the Springfield, the houses are marked in the traditional Irish language, the Republic of Ireland flags are displayed on homes, and painted murals display historical moments in Irish history. The Shankill, leading to the Woodvale area, is similar in nature though different in content. The Union Jack is displayed, and murals that decorate the walls of the area are influenced by English royalty and history. The two neighbourhoods are divided physically by a wall that seems similar to that of the divide between East and West Germany. In various areas of the Falls there are gates that allow visitors to pass between the two communities. These gates are open until dusk, and then shut for the night. The Springfield Road house, with its positioning on this dividing line, is a visible representation of an in-between existence.

The house itself appears similar to those around it, and there is very little in the way of defining it as something other than a normal residence. A small sign outside the front door names the home as that of the Cornerstone Community, but little else is present in the way of advertising the Community's existence. This is a seemingly purposeful action, as members

continuously state that they prefer a low-key presence within the local area. Current live-in Community member Sam Bright added: “One of the lines of our motto [is] ‘It’s a healing presence in a divided area.’ And really that’s what it is. It’s a house that’s there if people need it, and it’s a statement in itself that people actually want peace.”⁷⁸³

The inside of the house is open and inviting, with pictures of various Community-sponsored activities on the walls. Postcards and knick-knacks from past members and volunteers are scattered about the place with no real plan. The house looks, both from the outside and inside, as any family residence might. Again, there is no indication from the inside that an organisation runs itself here, except for a slightly disheveled office, the door of which remains shut for the majority of the day.⁷⁸⁴

Activities in the Springfield Road house centre on the weekly meetings of the members of the Cornerstone Community. According to Sam Bright, “The [Cornerstone] meetings are just really meetings where we get together and share God’s word and share with each other what’s going on in our lives.”⁷⁸⁵ Discussions in these meetings range from the financial aspects of Cornerstone to the spiritual, and always involve some update on the local community of North and West Belfast.⁷⁸⁶ Cornerstone has around twelve to sixteen active members attending these meetings most of whom live in the Springfield area and are over the age of fifty. The interactions in the weekly meetings amongst the members show the spirit of the Community even after twenty-six years of existence. Debates are common, if not encouraged, concerning subjects such as theology to the future of Cornerstone. It is this understanding of open conversation, some members believe, that is the key to understanding reconciliation in the

⁷⁸³ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 6.

⁷⁸⁴ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁷⁸⁵ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 5.

⁷⁸⁶ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

Springfield Road house. Sam Bright explained, “There’s always talk about walls coming down. I think walls need to come down in conversation, personally, before any public walls can come down.”⁷⁸⁷

This idea of the importance of conversation is best shown in the Community’s “Time for Reconciliation Project.” The Time for Reconciliation project concluded in April 2009, during the author’s time in the Springfield Road house, much earlier than previously expected. The reason for the cut was a lack of participation by the local community. This unsuccessful attempt at a major project of outreach was disappointing, and it appeared to solidify the members of Cornerstone’s understanding of their place as simply a presence in the Community.⁷⁸⁸

Cornerstone seems to be at an impasse concerning the question that has divided the Community in the past: If there is less violence, and less funding for cross-community endeavours, how are we to plan programmes in our local community. For some members, the answer to this question lies in the idea of presence in the Community, with a desire to encourage hospitality from within the house. For others, specifically the younger members of the Community, the need for more outreach is desirable.⁷⁸⁹ One way the Community does a bit of both of these is by offering their space to various religious groups for worship services. These groups are different each week, but they include the Unity Pilgrims, who use the space as a means of weekly worship and also a small group of twenty to thirty-year-old Protestant evangelicals who use the house for worship on a weekly basis.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁷ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 6.

⁷⁸⁸ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁷⁸⁹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁷⁹⁰ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

The Unity Pilgrims

As of 2009, the Unity Pilgrims continue to go to different local Protestant churches for the sake of better understanding among the different denominations. They offer something to the local community that is unlike the route of many reconciliation communities in Northern Ireland who have avoided the church altogether. When asked if the Pilgrims are well received in different congregations, Gerry Reynolds said:

I mean people were obviously puzzled, not so puzzled as to wondering why we were coming. And I remember one person asked, “Are you coming to see how we worship?” And I said, “No, not at all. We are coming just to be with you in humble service before God. We’re not coming to assess you or anything like that; we are just coming to be with you as worshippers.”⁷⁹¹

This understanding by the Pilgrims for the need of cross-community worship has been a successful one, and their endeavours continue to be met with positive outcomes. One member of Cornerstone, who goes to a Protestant church, stated that she was aware of many people who have no desire to associate with Catholics, but love the Unity Pilgrims and Gerry Reynolds.⁷⁹²

The Unity Pilgrims continue to do this style of cross-community worship, but as of 2009 they have also begun to set up cross-community education sessions. Starting in April, the Unity Pilgrims began a series in the Shankill Public Library titled, “What do Catholics believe?” Each week there is a different theme such as the Eucharist and the Pope. Clergy from both sides speak on the subject and then hold general small group discussions before returning to final questions. The need for patience and understanding amongst both groups is vital for meetings such as these to be successful, and thus far both sides have succeeded in creating such an

⁷⁹¹ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 58.

⁷⁹² Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 48.

environment. The sessions have also been well received by the local community at large, with many participants commenting that it is the first time a Catholic-initiated project has not been publicly protested in the Shankill area.⁷⁹³ Another successful venture in outreach that the Cornerstone Community supports is the Forthspring and Currach Community projects. The current work of these projects is described in the following section.

Forthspring and the Currach Community

The building of Forthspring is akin to that of a school. There are various offices and classrooms, a canteen, and areas for sports activities. The atmosphere of the place can also be similar to a school's, depending upon the time at which one visits. The morning activities are aimed toward pensioners, while the afternoons and nights are reserved for youth and children. Along with regular adult activities, Forthspring hosts an active after-school programme which engages children from both sides of the divide with homework advice, creative arts, and outdoor activities. There are also Protestant and Catholic activity nights throughout the week that offers a safe place for youth to socialise, and a toddler-carer group meets weekly for chats and advice on parenting.⁷⁹⁴

The connection of Forthspring with the Currach and Cornerstone Communities is still very strong. The Currach Community, which consists of two Catholic sisters living in the Protestant-Woodvale area directly behind the peaceline, host the weekly woman's group at Forthspring. Accordingly, members from the Cornerstone Community help lead the weekly senior citizens group. Cornerstone also employs one volunteer yearly, usually from the United

⁷⁹³ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁷⁹⁴ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

States or Germany, to come and live in the house and help with the activities of the Community. These volunteers also work at Forthspring with the youth programme. This work involves regular programmes at the centre and “detached” work within the Community on Friday nights.⁷⁹⁵

Despite the help that Forthspring offers the local community by way of after-school programmes and family activities there are mixed emotions concerning its work by those who live in the area. The current Cornerstone volunteer, who works part-time at Forthspring, has received complaints from local residents about misbehaving youth. One incident involved Forthspring participants who, after an event, were rioting in the Springfield neighbourhood, resulting in destruction of property. This has caused people in the local area to request that certain nights of youth activities be deemed as strictly Catholic or Protestant. This suggestion was accepted by Forthspring, and any youth activities occurring at night are now divided. This has caused distress among many of the youth workers who joined Forthspring in order to help bring Catholics and Protestants together. It was expressed informally by one volunteer that there is a feeling that those who work within Forthspring are not doing cross-community work, but are simply youth workers maintaining a divide. This again shows the pull between the desire to maintain peace in the local community whilst also striving to bring together volatile groups of people.⁷⁹⁶

Protests from the local area are coupled with a lack of funding, which is currently a major issue with Forthspring. As of April 2009, Forthspring was forced to cut its current after-school programmes due to a loss of a project worker. After-schools were the most popular of

⁷⁹⁵ The Forthspring Inter Community Group, *Forthspring Inter Community Group Newsletter* (Belfast: Forthspring Inter Community Group, March 2009), 1-4 and The Forthspring Inter Community Group, *Forthspring Inter Community Group Annual Report 2008-9* (Belfast: Forthspring Inter Community Group, 2008-9), 1-8.

⁷⁹⁶ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

the activities at Forthspring, and the loss of the worker was devastating to those students who regularly attended.⁷⁹⁷

Cornerstone's strongest attribute has always been its location. Because the members were from the community and thus lived, worked, and went to church there, they always had a finger on the pulse of what was needed. As Sam Bright stated: "I think Cornerstone really shone best when the Troubles were at their worst. Because it was a chance for them to actually reach out to people who were in need."⁷⁹⁸ The situation in Northern Ireland has changed, however, and with less an idea as to what is needed and how to achieve it, the practical side of the Community is slowing to a halt.

The future of Cornerstone in this changing Northern Ireland culture is debatable, even amongst members. There is great diversity amongst what people understand as being the direction in which Community should go. Perhaps the biggest compliment that can be offered Cornerstone is that, despite their varying views, there is always, at the very least, consideration for the ideas offered by members concerning projects and events. The result is an increasing number of projects going on outside the Springfield Road house, but still under the name Cornerstone. Perhaps the best way to understand these differing ideas is through an examination of those within the Community. Below are various personal perspectives from members of the Cornerstone Community, which will offer some insight on those who are working towards reconciliation in the local area.

⁷⁹⁷ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁷⁹⁸ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 5.

Personal Perspectives From Current Staff and Members

Introduction

The following section will explore the historical and theological developments of a few key members of the Cornerstone Community. Each case study will begin with a description, socially and theologically, of the participant's life from childhood to adulthood. An emphasis will be placed on influential people, places, and events that they believe aided in their desire to work in the field of reconciliation. The final sections will look at where the participants stand now in their theology of reconciliation, and then finally, a conclusion, which will try and find common themes in the connection between the social and the theological in each case.

Sam Bright-Member-Resident of the Springfield Road House, Belfast

Sam Bright has spent his entire life in the Springfield Road area. He lived for the majority of his youth, in the 1980s and 90s, in a mostly Catholic, working-class estate located very near to the Shankill and Falls peaceline. Bright's family was Protestant and thus represented a small percentage of the population in this particular area, but he states that his parents did not make this division an issue in the household. He comments: "I know my own mum and dad, they weren't [political], they just wanted the whole trouble over, they didn't support any of it, [they], like most people, just wanted peace."⁷⁹⁹ Bright explained that only some politics were discussed in the house, and he initially had no concept of Catholics or Protestant until he was much older.

⁷⁹⁹ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 1.

Bright's realisation of denominational difference occurred, and consequently developed, because of two events: a cross-community trip where Protestants were needed ("The school organised a summer trip and they wanted Protestants and children, and I realised I must be a Protestant if they wanted me,")⁸⁰⁰ and his segregated walk to school each morning. Because Bright went to a Protestant school, it was necessary for him and the other Protestant students in the neighbourhood to walk from their estate northward through Ardoyne to the closest respective school area. At the same time as they were walking up, the Catholic students were walking down to their schools. Bright describes this scenario:

I think the school had a real task trying to create a peaceful environment because of the trip in the morning, the journey to school.⁸⁰¹ We had to go through that Catholic area, Ardoyne, by the time some boys got to school they were ready for war. They hated Catholics, and some of the teachers [at our school] were Catholics.⁸⁰²

These interactions developed the idea in Bright that there was some sort of deep division between Catholics and Protestants, and although this thought was not encouraged by his parents, being a minority in these surroundings enabled him to see this firsthand.⁸⁰³

This idea of difference was solidified when Bright was directly affected by an act of violence. Bright was a common visitor on Saturdays to a chip shop on the Shankill Road as a child; his mother allowed him to go and help the woman who owned the shop, and many of his relatives were frequenters there. One particular day, however, he had upset his mother in some

⁸⁰⁰ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 1.

⁸⁰¹ Bright gives an interesting perspective on why he thought the school failed in creating a peaceful environment: "I think one of the things I think about young people in Belfast is that because there's so little to do, a riot in the morning is exciting. A riot on the way home, people love it, people thrive on them, it keeps them talking, it's a topic of conversation. And it's just something to do apart from playing computer games or football, so I really think that the reason things haven't cleared up is because people actually enjoy it. Which is ridiculous, but true." Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 2.

⁸⁰² Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 2.

⁸⁰³ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 2.

form and she wouldn't allow him to go help. That particular Saturday was the date of the Shankill bombing, and although Bright was not in the shop at the time, his uncle and his cousin were badly injured as a result of the bomb.⁸⁰⁴

This act angered Bright, but did not consequently lead to his participation in violence. Bright believes that he did not become a part of the violence, and instead became interested in reconciliation, because of his involvement in cross-community ventures. Socially, he was an active member in church, and although his church prayed often for the Troubles that raged around them, there were no practical cross-community attempts. He eventually found these initiatives, instead, through Cornerstone and Forthspring and through his local school. Bright is thus a unique member of the Cornerstone Community because he is young enough to have participated in their activities in the local community as a youth.⁸⁰⁵

The one event, however, that Bright sees as changing his views on the "other" and his thoughts on participating in the violence was a cross-community trip, organised by his school, to the United States. The trip was coordinated through an organisation called Peace and Reconciliation in Theater for Youth (PARITY). This group was created by Jaz Pollock, a youth worker in Belfast, and its aim was to bring together youth from both sides of the divide and encourage dialogue through the creative arts. Bright explains aspects of PARITY: "And actually we would work with some of the families who were hurting, or put on a play about the Troubles so you were dealing with it in a very real, practical way but you weren't brushing it under the carpet as though it didn't happen, you were being real about it and owning up to the fact that, 'Yes, this has happened.'"⁸⁰⁶ Bright stated that Pollock went above and beyond the job

⁸⁰⁴ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 3.

⁸⁰⁵ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 1, 4.

⁸⁰⁶ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 4.

description with this group and he cites her as being the most influential person in his desire for reconciliation:

She [Pollock] kept us right on things that were going on, and tried to keep us from getting angry about things that were going on. She was working on both sides, she herself was Protestant and she herself had bad experiences in the Troubles, but she, in a very subtle way, helped us to get over a couple of injustices that happened. If we had a meeting that night, and there was a bomb or a shooting, she would have brought us together to talk about it. But by the end of the night, the people who were actually in the room, there was a real healing that was taking place. And you never really got into any like bigotry or hate or anything. It was very important because there was no time for it to get anymore corrupted than it already was corrupt. And so you were dealing with things as it happened, so you actually got a chance to share how you felt about it.⁸⁰⁷

Pollock organised a cross-community trip to the United States with PARITY. This trip involved team-building activities, sharing of stories, sports, and discussions on cultural and religious differences that existed within the group. Bright said that when the trip was over, there was a genuine understanding among the youth that their differences were not as large as they had grown to believe. Thus, upon returning home, there was an increased desire by the youth to stay connected and defy the social norm of segregation. He adds: “That made me realise there had to be something back home that we could change and I realised then that I had to stay out of this [violence], it wasn’t right. Now, I didn’t know the solution or how to get other people out of it, because they enjoyed it. It was enjoyable, but it just meant that I didn’t fit into that ship.”⁸⁰⁸

Bright had made a commitment to reconciliation which caught the attention of his friends from Cornerstone, specifically live-in resident Isabel Hunter, who asked him if he would be interested in becoming part of the Community and also being a permanent fixture in the

⁸⁰⁷ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 4.

⁸⁰⁸ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 2.

Springfield Road house. He agreed to this arrangement in 2006, and has continued living in the house and working with the Community ever since.

Bright has worked for the past three years with Paul Twomey, Cornerstone's project worker, on the "Time for Reconciliation" project. Along with his official duties, Bright is a relative fixture in the house as continuous source of hospitality and helpfulness. When asked about his thoughts on Christianity and the work of reconciliation he explains: "I don't think you can be a Christian and not support reconciliation, although a lot of people don't. For me it's the main part of it, it's the main part of God. Unity and bringing people together. I think everyone is called in a way. I wouldn't say I have a special calling to work in this, but I think as a Christian it's a duty more than a call."

Sam Burch-Member-Former Leader, Newcastle, Co. Down

Sam Burch grew up in a working-class neighbourhood in West Belfast on the Grosvenor Road in the 1940s. The Grosvenor Road served as the dividing line in the area, for it was a direct route into town, with one side of the street being Catholic and the other Protestant. Even at an early age he knew that crossing the street was not something to be encouraged. The line between the neighbourhoods was so set, in fact, that Sam and his friends would often sneak up to the dividing line just to see how close they could get before running away. He explains that as a child of the 1940s, the divisions were present, but just not talked about or explained fully:

But on the whole you didn't have intercourse in a meaningful way with the other side. Now, you might have met them in the shop, they might have served you, they might have served you in the bank, and you would have dealt with them like that, but you didn't have social intercourse with them. And mixed marriages were absolutely frowned upon. Terrible disaster to befall a family if a relative of yours married into the other side.⁸⁰⁹

This division was not discussed within the household, for Burch grew up with Protestant parents who were not overtly political, although he states that a great number of his extended family would have been “Orange”⁸¹⁰ people.

Social activities for Burch were centred on school and church life. He attended the local Protestant school where he socialised with other youth from his community. He was also involved in the local Church of Ireland, but soon left it for the Methodist church because of his interest in the Boy's Brigade, a local youth organisation. These normal, boyhood activities were cut short, unfortunately, when he was evacuated from Belfast in 1941 to his grandmother's home to avoid danger as a result of the war.

When the war had ended, he returned back home and began his theological training. It was during this time that Burch believed sincerely that there was a chance that Northern Ireland could be ‘normal’ again:

That was in the 50s, early 60s, there was no sign of trouble. We all felt that we were headed toward a more open society, more Catholics coming to university, more Catholics into government, into social and civil service. We were just becoming a modern state. The modern businesses were coming in, Cordals (sic) into Carrickfergus, and Michelin into Hyde Park out beyond Glengormley. And they didn't care a dang what religion you were, or any religion. So we were becoming more, as I say, modern state, and the old religious denominational allegiances were very much eroding away at that stage.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 7.

⁸¹⁰ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 100.

⁸¹¹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 9.

The next several years after Burch left seminary saw the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. As a minister-in-training, Burch was required to take up several different placements throughout the local area. One of these placements was in Port-a-Down, where he attempted to start a cross-community, clergy fellowship through his congregation. This project gained a few followers, but was not well received overall in a community that Burch describes as “The heartland of Orangeism.”⁸¹² He saw this negative attitude towards ecumenical ventures most strongly in his congregation, who could not understand why he would want to be associated with the people who “weren’t even Christian.”⁸¹³ At the end of his time in Port-a-down, he was placed in another congregation, a voluntary position to the Shankill Road. Burch quotes one sympathetic lady in the Shankill congregation who commented on his move, joking: “Out of the frying pan, into the fire, Mr. Burch!”⁸¹⁴

The Shankill project for Burch, along with being an experiment in team ministry, was an attempt to have a moderate voice on the predominately Protestant Shankill Road. At the time there were only two Methodist churches on the Shankill. One was Evangelical Methodist and the other more akin to the Wesleyan tradition. While Burch and his team attempted to bring the churches of the Shankill together for talks, things became more violent in the city. Burch’s plans for cross-community ventures in the area were replaced with the need to sustain a sense of peace within his congregation. Shootings in the area continued to become more frequent as the Troubles raged on, and the “Shankill Butchers”⁸¹⁵ began their reign of terror over the area. Burch struggled to keep his own congregation at bay during these times of extreme violence,

⁸¹² Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 9.

⁸¹³ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 9.

⁸¹⁴ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 9.

⁸¹⁵ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 112.

and he gives credit to the churches of the Shankill for their work in quelling retaliatory violence:

That was really our whole energies, and we weren't doing anything about the big fight that was going on, apart from trying to hold congregations from becoming utter mad men and starting a civil war. So you were trying to calm and the same was happening in every church that I could think of, they were trying to calm things and get people to be reasonable and not go mad whenever there was an incident. People would want to go out into the streets and burn all the Catholics out that they knew about, or go and murder as many [as possible].⁸¹⁶

It was during this time of upheaval that Burch came into contact with Bill Jackson, a Presbyterian who was also working in the Shankill area. Jackson invited Burch to a cross-community fellowship that he had been attending, which would later become the Clonard group.

Burch was a participating member through all of the various developments of Cornerstone through the 1970-80s. When Cornerstone had been established for some years, he asked to be released from pastoral duties at his local congregation in order to be leader of the Community. When asked about why he made this decision he offered this explanation:

What I really felt was that the churches should be playing a major part in the healing of these things, but we are paralysed, as I say, because they had become tribal churches. And I felt that maybe, if groups like Corrymeela, and Cornerstone and Rostrevor and whoever else came into being, could sell this vision to the churches, then the churches would be the great healing agency for this whole thing.⁸¹⁷

Burch's post as leader could not have come at a more confusing time for the ecumenical Community. Cornerstone was early in its development at this stage, and still unsure as to what

⁸¹⁶ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 10.

⁸¹⁷ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 11.

activities would take place outside the walls of the Springfield Road house. The answer to this came by way of Fr. Gerry Reynolds of Clonard who called Burch after hearing of a shooting in the Shankill. Reynolds wanted to visit the family of the man who had died and he wanted Burch to come with him. Burch recalled his thoughts on this endeavour: “I was very, very doubtful, a priest going into the Shankill? Even on the good days whenever there was no troubles, a priest going into the Shankill was taking his life in his hands, but this [murder] was buzzing like a fury, he could have been attacked in the street and slaughtered, but he was determined.”⁸¹⁸ So they went to the Shankill together, and were received into the house, not of the widow, but of the parents who lived next door. This act was the start of a legacy of visiting the houses of families who had lost loved ones in the Troubles by Burch and Reynolds.

Reynolds and Burch became well known, in their own right, as being frequent visitors to the bereaved on both sides of the divide. This inspired those at Cornerstone to also become involved, and so many of the members began to attend funerals as a visible protest to the violence that had occurred. Cornerstone gained so much attention from these visits that Burch and others began to form public discussion groups at Clonard where members of both sides could tell their stories of violence. These discussion groups attracted the likes of Gerry Adams and members of the Unionist community and were successful in bringing together differing opinions from all sides.⁸¹⁹

In 1995, Burch passed on his leadership roles to Tom Hannon, although he remained active in the Community itself. When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation Burch said:

⁸¹⁸ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 12.

⁸¹⁹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 12.

Anybody who really follows Jesus and tries to listen carefully to what Jesus has said has to see the whole world as God's people. He's the Father of us all, as Jesus says, and wants us all to live in harmony. And part of the church's mission is not just to convert people to Jesus, but to reconcile them to God and to each other. I mean, that's, that's the Gospel. And if you believe that deeply, then you've got to work at it locally. We have the one mission, and that is to reconcile the world to God, and to build the Kingdom of God here on earth as near as we can.⁸²⁰

Burch speaks of reconciliation between humanity and God and humanity and humanity as the mission of each Christian, adding to it an eschatological element of a desire to create a Kingdom of God on earth as a result. He also admits, however, that there will always be violence in the world. Instead of seeing Cornerstone as the ultimate agent of reconciliation in the Springfield area, he sees them as a small pocket of inspiration. He tells the story of a nun who once spoke to him about Cornerstone saying: "You are a little seed."⁸²¹ This comment, concerning the need for people dedicated to reconciliation to be placed within local communities in strife despite their size, has inspired Burch to continue his work with the Cornerstone Community till the present.

Paddy Connolly-Member-Unity Pilgrims, Belfast

Paddy Connolly was raised in the Clonard-Falls area of West Belfast, living on the fringe of the Shankill area during the 1930s and 40s. Connolly remembered that while growing up in this area there would be sporadic acts of violence here and there, but nothing like what could be compared to the modern day Troubles. He and his friends would watch, with wonder,

⁸²⁰ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 14.

⁸²¹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 14.

the 12 July celebrations and parades, without having any real idea of their true meaning.⁸²²

Connolly recalled that even growing up he had no understanding of the deep-rooted nature of the division between the two communities, just that there was something different about the “other.” For example, Connolly explained that he lived near the Mackey plant, a plant that during World War II was used for manufacturing weapons. Each day he would watch men from the Shankill walk to and from this plant to work. He described the confusion that he felt over the fact that these men would walk so far to the plant and yet not one Catholic family he knew had a job there.⁸²³

When the Troubles began, the divide between the two communities only increased.

Connolly recalls anti-Catholic billboards that were posted throughout the city:

[The sign said:] “A Protestant parliament for a Protestant people,” on their hall [city hall] on Glengall Street, as you were coming out of the railway station, the main railway station in Victoria Street you could see up above their headquarters was “Not an inch.” In other words, we’ll not give into the Catholics, this is our land. Lord Brookeborough who was the Prime Minister said, “I wouldn’t have a Catholic about me. I would never employ a Catholic.” So there was that era of anti-Catholicism and the very important thing of lack of jobs and housing.⁸²⁴

During this time, Connolly trained for some years to join the priesthood, but soon grew to believe that the Catholic Church was not progressive enough for his political beliefs. He hoped for change, and was delighted when the Second Vatican Council was called by John the 23rd. Connolly recalled this time period: “That was a great time, and a great happening in the church. He brought in a whole idea of ecumenism and speaking to other churches and the barriers between the Catholic churches and other churches, denominations, Christian denominations

⁸²² See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 124.

⁸²³ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 16.

⁸²⁴ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 17.

started to come down and that was a marvelous happening.”⁸²⁵ Connolly explained that Vatican II, and the inequality he saw in Northern Ireland, created within him an enthusiasm for civil rights for Catholics. This was a passion that he shared with his wife, Gerardine Connolly. The pair participated in civil rights marches and held discussions in their homes with politicians and people from both communities.

As the Troubles began, however, the couple turned their attention from the civil rights cause to the idea of reconciliation. Connolly explained:

I think that was alright we wanted civil rights, and that was important and you wanted to be part of this Northern Ireland, you wanted to be recognised as equal citizens, but when things began to boil over and all these people were being killed. You began to realise that this can't go on, this is what pushed you towards the need to talk with other people, to talk with Protestants, to talk with politicians. When people are being killed you can't stand idly by, you must get off your chair and start doing something. And I think that that there is no use talking about Christ coming into the world reconciling the world to God, if you're not going to put that into your own, and use that, and that become part of your work in life. We were called to reconciliation.⁸²⁶

This call to reconciliation and the desire to be in the midst of a divided people meant that the couple often found themselves in dangerous situations. One such incident occurred during a Bible study at the Connolly's' home.⁸²⁷ In the midst of the study, a bomb went off two doors up at the Glenowen Pub. The members of the Bible study rushed out of Connolly's house to see people running from the pub, blood on their faces, needing help. Some of the people from the pub were ushered in the house, others taken to the hospital. The event left a deep imprint on the mind of all who saw the destruction that occurred that night. For Paddy and Gerardine the

⁸²⁵ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 19.

⁸²⁶ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 22.

⁸²⁷ Ray Davey, founder of Corrymeela, was at the house that night.

violence at the Glenowen Pub inspired them both to find a way to better utilise their desire to work in reconciliation.⁸²⁸

The couple knew Bill Jackson from the CLC group, and had always been on the fringe of the Cornerstone Community, but with a personal invitation from the leader Sam Burch, the couple decided to join. They continue to be active in the Community at present and are leaders within the Unity Pilgrims. Because of their interest in reconciliation, they also both received an Honours Masters degree in theology from the Irish School of Ecumenics.⁸²⁹

When asked about the connection between being a Christian and the idea of reconciliation, Connolly answered:

Christ was a person who was reconciliation in the world, continues to be, the risen Christ continues to be reconciliation in the world. And I think it takes you a long time from your childhood to your youth to understand what's going on in the world and what's going on in the churches. I believe that Christ is reconciling the world to God at all times, but we need to play our part, we are called to take part in that reconciliation.⁸³⁰

Connolly's views on both the political situation in Northern Ireland and theological views on reconciliation appear to have a sense of urgency about them. One can see someone who has witnessed a slow deterioration in the late 1960s after such a promising 1950s–early 1960s with the Vatican II meeting and the Catholic Civil Rights Movement. His transition into reconciliation seems to have occurred as he witnessed that he could go no longer just watching the violence and had to, as he states, “play [his] part”⁸³¹ in Christ reconciling the world.

Connolly adheres to the idea of Christ reconciling the world and calling Christians, as a duty, to

⁸²⁸ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 19.

⁸²⁹ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 19.

⁸³⁰ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 20.

⁸³¹ Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 20.

reconcile with one another. Connolly takes it even a step further than a duty to say that it is no use being a Christian if one is not willing to take on an active role in reconciliation. He also reiterated a theme that has occurred in the previous two interviews, moving beyond your history: learned, seen, heard, or otherwise:

I began to realise that you've got to overcome [your] history; you've got to work within what you've got. Not only that, but a lot of the history was wrong history, you know? It was learning all battles instead of trying to get into what really happened. And when you get into what really happened in these situations your view of things changes.⁸³²

Connolly reiterates an idea of reconciliation as truth, but not the kind of truth that you find from history classes, parents, peers, politicians, or word of mouth. Connolly speaks of finding this personal truth when one explores the history that they have been handed and then compare it to someone else's, which is a common practice amongst those members of Cornerstone. This comparing of truths, as he understands it, is the beginning of the process of reconciliation.

Gerardine Connolly-Member-Unity Pilgrims, Belfast

Gerardine Connolly grew up very close to her husband Paddy, in the Catholic area of North Belfast. She was born in 1935 to what she described as “anti-violent”⁸³³ parents. Despite the peace at home, her neighbourhood bore a lot of resentment against the Protestants that lived around in the surrounding areas. She recalled waking up each Sunday morning and seeing Protestants walking to the church down the street. She was amazed at how much nicer their clothes were than her own. It was with this understanding that she acknowledged there must be

⁸³² Paddy Connolly, Interview by Author, 23.

⁸³³ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 17.

a difference with these people and herself, although at the time she was not sure what it was.

She elaborated on this time in her life:

So all these different kinds of things I had in my mind that we were second-class citizens and that we were surrounded by these people who were keeping us down. And that was the attitude, no one actually told me not to like Protestants, but that was the atmosphere, the aura that you grew up in and that was the kind of mindset I had.⁸³⁴

In 1951, at the age of sixteen, Connolly joined the convent and moved to Africa to teach in a Catholic school there. The school in Africa enrolled students from all different races, religions and Christian denominations. It was here that she learned to lose any prejudice or bias she had for people who were different, so when she returned home to Belfast in 1965 she was hit with all the old feelings she had left behind. Gerardine met Paddy shortly thereafter, and together they “went through the whole Troubles together.”⁸³⁵

The couple was both present at the burning of Bombay Street,⁸³⁶ as Gerardine Connolly at the time lived one street away from where the fire took place. She recalled that day dodging bullets and trying to help people who lived on the street into cars so they could be taken to relatives’ homes elsewhere. This and several other acts of intense violence that were witnessed by the Connolly’s had a deep impact on their life and strengthened their dedication to the local community.⁸³⁷

Throughout the Troubles, the couple continued to be interested in civil rights, but also the idea of cross-community reconciliation. Connolly took a post as Vice Principal at the Hazelwood School, the only other integrated school in Northern Ireland at the time besides

⁸³⁴ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 16.

⁸³⁵ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 16.

⁸³⁶ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 104.

⁸³⁷ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 16-7.

Lagan College. They also became deeply involved with the Christian Life Communities prayer groups. It was through the CLC group that the Connolly's came to meet Bill Jackson, who introduced them to the Cornerstone Community. Connolly described her first thoughts on Cornerstone:

Now we were on the fringes of Cornerstone from the beginning. We weren't members but we knew the people that came into the house and we used to bring them food and do whatever we could for them. They had a prayer meeting once a month, once a week, for non-members and we attended that, it was cross-community. And gradually the thing grew and grew in our minds that this was the way to go.⁸³⁸

Connolly cites two events of violence that pushed her even closer to joining Cornerstone. The first of these events occurred on a day out in Belfast city centre. On this particular day both Paddy and Gerardine heard gunfire near where they were standing and went to see what had happened. Paddy saw two bodies on the ground nearby and ran over to see what he could do to help. The men had been shot, and Paddy insisted that Gerardine not look at them, but she already had done so. The gruesome sight imprinted itself on her memory.⁸³⁹

The second attack occurred on the Falls Road. Paddy's brother worked for the housing executive and at the time a number of bombs had gone off in the Falls Road, breaking windows as a result. These homes needed their windows boarded up; only Paddy's brother had to get permission to do so by a higher ranking official at the executive. This higher official, a Protestant, had the key to the homes in question. Instead of just giving Paddy's brother the key, however, he offered to come help board up the houses with him. He did so, but was later found shot on the Falls Road. The people in the neighbourhood deemed him "the Good Samaritan." Connolly explained how both these events affected her view on the situation in Northern

⁸³⁸ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 18.

⁸³⁹ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 22.

Ireland: “Now, it was incidences like that that made you feel [that] we were are all being harassed. We are all being killed, both sides. Innocent people are being killed, and we’re all the same. We might have political differences and religious differences, but we’re all the same. We’re all suffering and we have to do something about it.”⁸⁴⁰

As a result of the ever-increasing violence, the Connolly’s joined Cornerstone and have since remained active members of the Community. Their particular outreach ministry at Cornerstone is the Unity Pilgrims, of which they are vital members. In the wider community Connolly also serves on the Executive Council of the Council of Christians and Jews and is a member of the Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum. On her participation in these groups she said: “Wherever there’s anything to do with bringing people together or praying for people to come together, or helping to reconcile people, we [Paddy and Gerardine] would go to it, we would attend it, we would do whatever we could.”⁸⁴¹

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Connolly gave several answers:

Christ’s prayer was for unity and that at the beginning of creation there was harmony, it was man and woman who created the disharmony and it should be man and woman through Christ who should try to engender harmony again. I don’t think there will ever be complete harmony except at the end of the world. But it’s our Christian duty, it should be on our conscience, that we should work as much as possible towards bringing all peoples together, not just Christians, but all peoples together for harmony.⁸⁴²

⁸⁴⁰ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 23.

⁸⁴¹ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 18.

⁸⁴² Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 20.

These statements seem to fit with Connolly's witness to the disharmony that exists in Northern Ireland and her work with Cornerstone to help bring people together again. Connolly later brought up an interesting addition to the idea of harmony with an analogy to the Trinity:

That old word we used long ago, perichoresis, the dance of the Trinity. [It means] that the Trinity is in a constant dynamic, dance with one another. The persons of the Trinity and their oneness; it's a dynamic act of love, a dance of love, an inter-relationship, and we as Christians should be taking that as our model, and if we're going to spend this eternity in this relationship we have to start doing it now. And we are relational and yet we have broken up all those relationships, we have broken them by greed and envy and power. So this Kingdom of God that Christ came to spread on earth that really is restoring this harmony, this relationship.⁸⁴³

Tom Hannon-Member-Former Leader, Belfast

Tom Hannon lived and worked in the Springfield area his entire life. He began, as a child of the 30s and 40s, in the Lower Falls area of Belfast and was raised by an aunt and uncle, as his parents both died when he was a young child. His community was a close-knit mill area, where any neighbour was capable of discipline if one was caught misbehaving. He went to a Catholic school close to Clonard until he was around sixteen and then left to work at the local textile mill, Mackey's. Hannon went into Mackey's as a draftsman and worked there for forty-six years until it went out of business. Another significant event in Hannon's life during this time was that he met his wife of forty-nine years, Sally, who shared his passion for peace and reconciliation until her death four years ago.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴³ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 21.

⁸⁴⁴ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 23-6.

December 1969 saw the Hannon's in and out of the hospital with their youngest son Gavin, who was diagnosed with leukaemia. It was hard for Hannon to be in the hospital because of his son's ill health, but also for what he saw going on around him in Northern Ireland: "I would see young ones, babies and young children, innocent and suffering, and I thought to myself, 'This is the sort of thing that we should be spending our energies on, not bombing and killing each other.' So I moved towards the peace movement and so did Sally my wife."⁸⁴⁵

Gavin sadly passed away in 1974 and in 1975 Hannon's eldest daughter, Mary, was shot in the back as she was walking home from the cinema. She survived this attack, but was confined to a wheelchair as a result. When asked how this event made him feel about the peace process he was a part of, Hannon replied: "I think if anything it strengthened it [our desire for peace]. If anything it strengthened it, because it was a useless piece of ... We had six children, three boys and three girls, so if anything it strengthened the desire for peace, and to become involved in the peace movement."⁸⁴⁶

This dedication to reconciliation inspired the Hannons to join the Peace People, a group that arranged peace marches throughout Belfast in the 1970s and 80s. It was during this violent time period, that Hannon began to realise how accustomed he had come to the situation in Northern Ireland:

It [violence] was all part of the living of life. I remember watching a television programmes one evening and [simultaneously] there was a bit of a battle going on across the road, certainly somebody who had what sounded like a shotgun and he was firing on the military installation. And I was watching this programme on the television about detectives. A murder mystery they call it. And I was thinking to myself, what am I watching this thing for? Listen to what's going on outside. So you have this unreality in a way.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁵ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 26.

⁸⁴⁶ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 26.

⁸⁴⁷ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 29.

Along with becoming accustomed to violence, he went on to acknowledge that bigotry and hatred were issues that required constant checking, even if you were a so-called “peace-nic.” Hannon worked at peace conferences and held various talks throughout the country and tried to address the point that self-examination is the key to keeping these feelings at bay. He also acknowledged how important Cornerstone was to helping his own personal feelings about the situation:

You had to struggle from time to time, with things as elemental as hatred. And you looked; you see the advantage of Cornerstone, is that whenever “these bloody Prods” shoot a couple of “Taigs,”⁸⁴⁸ I see the faces of my Community. And you knew [these were] people that you wouldn’t have harmed for all the tea in China. So that was a learning process and it’s all a learning process. All of it.⁸⁴⁹

Hannon’s eventual position as leader of Cornerstone began with his son’s relocation to a new house. Hannon’s son had just sold his house, but unfortunately his new one was not yet ready, so Hannon offered his own as a temporary home. Cornerstone, aware of the Hannon’s from their involvement with the Peace People, gave them respite from, what had become an incredibly full house by offering a room at the Springfield Road house. The Hannon’s accepted the offer and lived there for five weeks, during which they found themselves acting as caretakers while members were away for the Easter holidays. During this time, the Hannon’s came into contact with a range of people that inevitably found themselves at the house, from visiting clergy to an inquisitive alcoholic. These encounters, diverse as they were, encouraged

⁸⁴⁸ Derogatory slang for Protestants and Catholics.

⁸⁴⁹ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 29.

the couple to join the Community. The couple worked with the Community in hosting bereaved families, leading Bible studies, establishing ecumenical prayer services and beyond.

In 1995, Hannon was asked to be leader of the Community and he accepted. He remained leader until Cornerstone transitioned into a team-style leadership in 2001. To this day Hannon holds a strong opinion on the importance of Cornerstone and Communities like it in the interface areas:

I can remember being at a television programme, part of the audience, on one of those talk shows and Gerry Kelly was there from *Sinn Féin*, Seamus Mann from the SDLP, and Dermitt Nelson from the Unionist Party. But they kept talking about the political process and the peace process, the political process, the peace process, and I was thinking to myself, “They think that the political process and the peace process are one and the same thing.” But I was thinking to myself, “The political process was what’s going on, taking place at Stormont, but the peace process is taking place at the interfaces. From the parents and toddlers groups to the senior citizens clubs and the after school clubs and all in between, that’s the peace process.”⁸⁵⁰

When asked about his thoughts on the connection between Christianity and the work of reconciliation, Hannon had a variety of answers. He described reconciliation as not being easy or particularly pleasant, because it means that you have to give up something, usually hatred or bigotry. It is not, Hannon believes, the nice words that so often get associated with that kind of work. Consequently, he said that even people who are doing reconciliation have to check themselves from time to time, especially when they are living in a community. Hannon described living in a community as reconciliation in action, where one goes through the day-to-day routine with others who are different, and in the same space. For example, he described the

⁸⁵⁰ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 38.

fact that he can rarely find things in the house; they just seem to disappear. He jokingly questioned: “What is the theology of a missing toast rack?”⁸⁵¹

In order to summarise his ideas on reconciliation, and his work in the Community, Hannon stated that all the work done within Cornerstone was a “parable of possibility.”⁸⁵² Hannon’s understanding of this possibility is that living together in harmony, or at best trying to live together generally, is the essence of reconciliation. And that all too often, especially in Northern Ireland, people are concerned too much with human doing, as opposed to human being. This is especially problematic, he believes, when a place like Northern Ireland has not quite mastered the being side yet.⁸⁵³

Isabel Hunter-Member-Resident of Springfield Road House, Belfast

Isabel Hunter was raised in the 1930s and 40s in the border town of Newry, close to the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland divide, making her the first interviewee not originally from the Falls-Shankill or Springfield area. She was raised by her father and an aunt, as her mother died when she was very young. She described Newry as a military town, and one which always presented her with a mixture of Protestant and Catholics because of its geographical position. This meant that although she knew that the Catholics went to other schools, she never was really aware of the deep-seated differences between the two groups.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵¹ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 38.

⁸⁵² Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 35.

⁸⁵³ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁸⁵⁴ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 40.

Hunter's family came from a long line of "Old Presbyterians,"⁸⁵⁵ who lived in Port-a-Down and were in support of a united Ireland. She and her family, as a tradition, would go to visit them and watch the parades on 12 July each year. In general, Hunter's life was removed from the violence that occurred in many parts of Northern Ireland, but she still knew, via media outlets, about the acts against both communities in the first era of Troubles.⁸⁵⁶ She said: "The other children, with great gusto, would tell about the terrible things the IRA had done and that the Protestants had done to the IRA, dreadful things. I used to feel sick at that."⁸⁵⁷ When asked about her social interactions with the "other," Hunter said that the schools were relatively mixed as were her social interactions. The town of Newry, at least during the time period she lived there, was relatively at peace.⁸⁵⁸

Hunter left Newry in the late 1940s and attended Stranmillis Teaching College in Belfast. It was here she began to realise the more evident social division between Catholics and Protestants:

[At the school] we were all Protestant, but nobody ever mentioned it, but it was assumed that Protestants went to one place and Catholics to another. But again it was never really discussed. In those days the old Troubles were over and the War [World War II] had passed a few years, so there wasn't really much talk about it at that time.⁸⁵⁹

After attending the teacher's college, Hunter worked at two schools before taking up residence in a rural city suburb of Belfast with her aunt. It was while working here that the second wave of Troubles began in Northern Ireland. When asked how life changed for her during this time,

⁸⁵⁵ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 40.

⁸⁵⁶ Many of those interviewed talk about the first set of Troubles as the days surrounding the 1920s partition and then again as the time period beginning in 1969.

⁸⁵⁷ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 41.

⁸⁵⁸ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 41.

⁸⁵⁹ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 42.

she explained that there would have been bombs going off every night and searches by police if you left the house.⁸⁶⁰

In 1974, the Loyalist strike⁸⁶¹ was particularly hard on Hunter, as her aunt became critically ill, and she had no way of getting to the pharmacy or the grocery store. After the death of her aunt, Hunter decided to leave the country and, in theory, never return: “It was the strike, the Loyalist strike that really put me off. I thought, I never want to live in this country again, so I went to Germany and had a very interesting time teaching English there.”⁸⁶²

Hunter’s teaching in Germany was limited to two years and at the end of her time there she attended a gathering where a minister came and spoke with her about her future plans and also the current situation in Belfast. She said, “One minister, a German minister, came up to me and said, ‘I’m sure you feel you should be in your own country in this difficult time.’ And I was feeling anything but that, I thought I was glad to be out of it. But it made an impression on me.”⁸⁶³ This impression was so deep that Hunter returned to Belfast in 1977 and began teaching at a school in a working-class, Loyalist area.

The school in which Hunter worked quickly introduced her to what Belfast had become in her absence. She recalled a story where her students offered to take her empty milk jugs out to the trash, seemingly to be kind, but were in reality hiding them and using them for petrol bombs. Hunter said she tried to speak with the kids concerning what was going on, but it was very difficult because of the violence that was occurring around them on an almost daily basis, and also because of the influence of their parents:

⁸⁶⁰ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 43.

⁸⁶¹ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 110.

⁸⁶² Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 43.

⁸⁶³ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 43.

Well they would have heard it all at home and they would have heard the bombs. No matter who had set the bombs off, because both groups were doing it, they would have blamed, I suppose, the Nationalist side. But obviously you would try, if they would say anything you would try to get them to think differently. But it wasn't that easy, because they heard it all at home and they heard the bombing at night and saw the flashes and all that.⁸⁶⁴

Hunter took an early retirement from the school in 1977. She then came into contact, via a talk at her home church, with a minister from the Shankill Presbyterian church. He spoke at great length about what was going on in that particular area of Belfast. Hunter decided to pay a visit to the church to see if there was any way she could help, and this led to her becoming a member. This was also the vehicle in which she came to meet up with members of the Clonard group. It was soon thereafter that Hunter met with the minister Bill Jackson, because she felt as though God was giving her messages through scriptures. She felt strongly that these messages were leading her towards the idea of starting a Community like Corrymeela. This initial discussion led to the the subsequential development of the Cornerstone Community.⁸⁶⁵

When asked what were some of the most significant events that occurred through her work with Cornerstone, Hunter named two. One was the work that the Community did with paramilitaries, inviting them in for tea and to have various talks with one another. The other was the work the Community did with the bereaved. On one such occasion, Hunter and a Catholic member went to visit with a lady whose husband had passed away. The woman never spoke to the two and so the two did not speak back, but were simply a presence in the room. Hunter said she met the woman some time later in a local shop. The widow said that she could not speak

⁸⁶⁴ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 44.

⁸⁶⁵ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 48.

during that time, but that she so appreciated them being there. It was moments like these, although very different in nature, that left lasting impressions on Hunter.⁸⁶⁶

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation Hunter replied:

I think if you're not interested in Christianity, or even if you're an extreme Protestant or an extreme Catholic, then you're not interested in reconciliation. I think those who are really Christian are beginning to realise that it's God's way, it's a change. My personal vision would be to have all Christians of all denominations meeting together, praying together and working together for the good of the whole community.⁸⁶⁷

Currently, Hunter lives out her understanding of reconciliation by serving as a presence in the Cornerstone house, welcoming those that come in whether it for Bible studies or prayer meetings. She is, through her hospitality, a representative of the Community to those who come in from the local area.

Gerry Reynolds-Member-Leader of Unity Pilgrims, Belfast

Gerry Reynolds is the only member of Cornerstone interviewed who was not born in Northern Ireland, but instead was born just outside of Limerick City in the Republic of Ireland. His father died when he was a young boy and his mother raised him in a predominately Catholic farming area. Growing up in the 1940s, he had very little contact with Protestants growing up, just those who would come to buy eggs from the farm. He stated that he knew that Protestants were different, but never really understood why at that stage in his life.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁶ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 46.

⁸⁶⁷ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 50.

⁸⁶⁸ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 50.

In his late teens he left the Limerick area and went to university in Galway, afterwards attended seminary. It was during his time there, in 1958, that Pope John 23rd called together bishops for the second Vatican Council. Reynolds recalls this event:

And he [Pope John 23rd] had the goal for that council of bringing the church up to date, as it were. What he called the (sic) and the restoration of the unity of Christians, and the way he presented all that, was leave history as history. Let's not argue who was right and who was wrong but let's come together in the love of Christ and work for the Kingdom of God. So the impact of John 23rd in my life was profound and I always would see that as a great turning point. I mean a great inspiration and so that opened me towards other churches.⁸⁶⁹

Reynolds cited this as being the beginning of a series of events that broke old moulds in his life.

Another such significant event in Reynolds's life occurred after his ordination. The tradition is that when a priest is newly ordained he will return home and offer blessings to friends, family, and neighbours. Reynolds's concern was that the one Protestant neighbour who lived close to the family might not receive his blessing. His fears were unfounded, however, and when he asked her permission to bless her she was delighted, and agreed.

Reynolds gave one last influential event in this time period of his life that affected his views on ecumenism; this was the marriage of his sister to an English Protestant. This type of marriage was unheard of in Reynolds's time, and he feared that it would bring division in his family. As the wedding date drew closer, Reynolds' extended family decided that supporting their daughter was more important than excluding her, and they chose to participate in the wedding. With all of these events and the ever-present effects of the Vatican Council meetings, Reynolds felt himself moving towards being a part of an ecumenical movement:

⁸⁶⁹ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 51.

[The Vatican II Council was] creating ecumenism and the *Lumen Gentium*, the constitution of the church, and the kind of affirmation that all the Christian Churches in a very profound way belong to the Church. We're not in full communion, but we're in real communion. The people of the Protestant churches are not separate from us but we are bonded together in the mystery of the church and the mystery of the Trinity, created out of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's involvement with us. The rest of my life has been working out the implications of that, and working for right relationships in the Church.⁸⁷⁰

This passion for ecumenism continued after his ordination, as he began working at a publishing company in Dublin that was run by the Redemptorist, the order to which he belonged. It was with his work that he was daily in contact with members of the Church of Ireland, and thus became close with members of the Protestant denomination. This job lasted from 1962-69 and from 1969-75 he worked for The Communications Institute, which is run by the Irish Catholic Bishops.

Major events in the Troubles began while Reynolds was working in the Republic of Ireland. During his time working in the media, he was dealing with stories of violence on an almost daily basis. With this increase in violence in the 1970s, many local leaders in Northern Ireland encouraged a meeting of cross-community clergy in Ballymascanlon on the 26 September 1973. Reynolds attended this meeting and it was here that he first came into contact with a Methodist minister Jim McAvoy. McAvoy's church was less than a mile and half from where Reynolds lived in Dublin and yet the two had never met before. They decided at this meeting to bring what they had gained from the meeting about reconciliation back to their local area. The result of this meeting was the creation of a cross-community clergy forum in Dublin that brought together leaders from the Catholic and Protestant church. The forum was successful, and continues today.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁷⁰ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 52.

⁸⁷¹ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 52.

From 1975-83 Reynolds worked in his local community in Limerick and then in the West of Ireland. It was during this time that he began to feel the need for a new placement outside of the relatively normal settings he had worked in previously. After taking a trip to Asia, Reynolds had been inspired by the mission opportunities there. At the same time he felt a calling to Northern Ireland because of all the violence that he was continuously hearing about in the news. In 1983, much to his delight, he was offered a position at Clonard Monastery in West Belfast. He explained his feelings at this time:

I was so happy and just ready. I never asked to come to Belfast, it just happened like that. I was in some way orientated towards the place and the [pursuit of] God's way of peace. The church is God's peace process in human history. That's what the Christian church is meant to be. The church is meant to be God's peace process, bringing His will to be done on earth as in heaven. And so I came here with that deep sense of the centrality of the church in the work for peace.⁸⁷²

At the start of his time at Clonard, Reynolds came into contact with Bill Jackson via Reynolds' interest in the people of the Shankill area, and Jackson thereby put him into contact with Cornerstone. Through his connection with the Cornerstone Community Reynolds began the Unity Pilgrims, which has proven to be incredibly successful in the local community. When asked about his thoughts on the responsibility of the church in aiding in reconciliation, he stated:

We must be together in a visible unity, in whatever way we work it out. And the central focus of that unity is being together before God in the praise of God, and in the humble service of God. So, I believe that the church in Northern Ireland has a providential role in history, because for so many reasons. The community here has suffered so much because of division, and the division in the church in some way contributed to that division.⁸⁷³

⁸⁷² Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 55.

⁸⁷³ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 58.

He goes on to say that he is not sure how this type of unity will work itself out in Northern Ireland, but that he is always mindful of waiting for “God’s little surprises”⁸⁷⁴ and that is all he can hope for at this time.⁸⁷⁵

When asked about the connection between Christianity and reconciliation, Reynolds reflects on the influence of French Priest, Paul Couturier. Reynolds experienced Couturier’s work in a lecture series devoted to the “Lessons from the Masters.” He described the life of Couturier. Couturier believed that Christianity as a whole was missing out because of its divisions. He was convinced that if all the denominations could find common connections then there would a unity unlike what has been seen since the reformation. Couturier created the “Unity Prayer,” a prayer which all Christians could say freely together. This prayer is as follows: “Enable all of us to meet one another in you, and let your prayer for the unity of Christians be ever in our hearts and on our lips. Unity such as you desire and by the means that you will.”⁸⁷⁶ This prayer is the official prayer of the Cornerstone Community, and Reynolds sees the prayer as a way that the Community can declare their hope for unity in Northern Ireland. Reynolds shares this view, and has committed himself to continue his work with Cornerstone and the Unity Pilgrims in the coming years.

⁸⁷⁴ Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 58.

⁸⁷⁵ It should be noted that when discussing unity no one interviewed stated that they want one church, but instead the peace and richness that comes with two unique traditions working, praying, and worshipping together in harmony.

⁸⁷⁶ This prayer was also adopted by the Cornerstone Community as their common prayer. Paul Couturier quoted in Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 53.

Interviewee's Historical and Theological Summary

Many of the members do not have exact times when they feel as though they were inspired to work in reconciliation, but they all cite their motivations as Christian in nature. Some members went as far as to say that it working in reconciliation was synonymous with being a Christian. By examining some of the lives of a few members of Cornerstone Community there are recurring themes, both socially and theologically. The first theme that appears in the transcripts is reconciliation as a Christian duty. Although many would find reconciliation to be an important aspect of Christianity, those working in Cornerstone cited it as not a Christian calling, but a duty.

An interesting social aspect that ties in with interviewees focus on unity is that of a lack of church participation in cross-community events. Most of the people interviewed stated that their churches rarely participated in any type of projects that would include people from the two divides. So, in theory, those who find reconciliation as a practical, Christian duty were themselves not raised in churches that believed likewise or encouraged this type of belief. This might also explain why a common hope with the members is to be an inspiration to the churches to participate in such work. The need, according to the members of Cornerstone, is for a church that accepts its duty to reconciliation, and the hope is that the members of the Community serve as that inspiration.

A second theme that arose in the interviews is reconciliation as presence. Many members complained that, as much as they enjoy their visitors to Cornerstone, they often come hoping to solve what is described as the "Irish Problem." Visitors come to Northern Ireland with many ideas about how to fix what has gone awry, and although their motivations are surely

sincere, it causes annoyance among those who spend their lives working in these interface communities. Oftentimes these visitors are themselves from Northern Ireland, but have lived in areas that have experienced little violence. They too offer their opinions and solutions on the situation. This is a common complaint among those who are working at Cornerstone, and likewise a common theological theme is the idea of presence as opposed to outreach. Even outside the walls of the Community, at funerals for paramilitaries who had died, the members speak of simply being present as a visible example of solidarity and peace among the communities.

The third most common theme in the interviews was reconciliation as mutual understanding. Of the people who grew up in the Shankill-Falls or Springfield area, all of them stated that their parents did not discuss politics, or the “other” in the household. The members repeatedly stated that as youth they understood there was a difference between themselves and the other group, but they were never quite sure of what that difference was. Another social element that adds to this idea of misunderstanding is schooling. Again, it was repeated often that each group learned their history, be it British or Irish, in their schools, but never the “other’s” history. These elements of separation combined to create two separate groups of people in Northern Ireland who essentially knew nothing of one another. There were several different reactions to these common themes of separation and division from the interviewees. Some members went abroad and were able to gain perspective on Northern Ireland’s situation. Others had resources, such as school programmes or cross-community groups outside the household that aided them in understanding the situations as they happened. Whatever the method in gaining perspective on their personal experiences were, the members seemed certain that the two separate groups in Northern Ireland will never be able to accept one another, let

alone ask for forgiveness or be repentant, until they learn about the “other,” and unfortunately the current social context in these areas does not cater to this. There was no easy answer given by the interviewees for an increased emphasis on mutual understanding outside the Springfield Road house. There was simply the acknowledgement that a re-learning of history might be difficult and unpleasant, but it never ceased to be something that the members found to be important in their ministry of reconciliation.

The fourth common theme in the interviews is reconciliation as unity found in God alone. The two words that were used the most in these interviews by the members of Cornerstone, apart from reconciliation, were harmony and unity. This is an interesting perspective considering that all but one of the members interviewed grew up in strictly segregated neighbourhoods, and all have spent some of their lives living in the Shankill-Falls or Springfield area. The interviewees, perhaps more so than much of the population of Northern Ireland, have witnessed firsthand disunity and disharmony. Time and again, however, this idea of unity in God was spoken about as a hope for Northern Ireland. Two members spoke of this unity in connection with the idea of the Trinity and its diverse but harmonious attributes. Accordingly, in almost every interview unity occurred within the realm of the common factors of God and Christ, not in the form of politics or social work. The experiences of the members of Cornerstone, living in these areas, seem to have taught them that this type of unity is difficult to achieve. This concept of unity, according to those interviewed, was not something that could be created by humans, a false or fabricated unity, but one that occurred only in common communion with God.

The final reoccurring theme in the interviews is reconciliation as the Kingdom of God on earth. Tom Hannon described Cornerstone as a “Parable of Possibility,” which speaks to

the Community's belief that they might create something that has been impossible in their local context. The idea that all of the individual members Cornerstone, with their different backgrounds and beliefs, can come together for prayer groups, Bible studies, and social activities shows the whole of Northern Ireland that it is possible. This appears to be the way that the Community members understand the Kingdom of God: Unity amongst people is the intention of God for earth and thus represents what the coming Kingdom will be.

It is not difficult to see that a hope for unity would be desired by those who are living in such a divided area. Some of the most moving parts of the interviews with the members at Cornerstone were the moments when each person described the violence that they had witnessed personally, or that had occurred amongst loved ones. There is a deep-rooted hurt in their stories that lingers, and it is these descriptions of violence that seem to stir emotions more than anything else. The continuous search for unity on earth, therefore, is what many of the members find to be their ministry of reconciliation: as a Christian duty, being a presence in a violent area, with the desire of creating mutual understanding and unity in God, and thus serving as an example of the Kingdom on earth.

With the two case studies, Corrymeela and Cornerstone in mind, we move now to a discussion chapter which looks to bring all of the elements of this research together in order to discuss how the social context influences a theology of reconciliation. This chapter will incorporate the theological perspective established in Chapter Two, and will take into account the overall history of Northern Ireland along with the findings within the chapters on Corrymeela and Cornerstone.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The previous chapters have built a foundation for a discussion on the social context's influence on the theology of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. An introduction to the theology of reconciliation has offered a background into both the historical and continuing development of this theological concept within academia. It also suggested a model of the theology of reconciliation that took into account the role of the social context in these developments. The third chapter described the history of Northern Ireland and ended with a description of how this history has influenced views on reconciliation. Chapters Four and Five introduced the case studies within this research, the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities.

This chapter's aim is to take these individual aspects of the research question, as presented in the previous chapters, and discuss possible understandings of how the social context has influenced the theology of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. This will be attempted through an analysis of the social context's influence on the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Community that traces the ways the Communities have reacted theologically to historical time periods in Northern Ireland. This analysis will involve using the theology of reconciliation model that was established in Chapter Two to examine the movement within the understandings of the theology of reconciliation by each Community throughout their respective histories. These models are compiled of the four main concepts within the theology of reconciliation (truth, justice, forgiveness and repentance) and aim not to define these words definitively, but to

show how each of the Communities interpreted them. Following these sections for each Community, there will be discussion of how the Communities themselves served as a social context from which change in theological understanding occurred. Finally, there will be a section that compares and contrasts the ways that Corrymeela and Cornerstone have been influenced theologically by their respective social conditions. The intention is that through this analysis one might be able to discern the ways that these two reconciliation communities were theologically influenced by their social context throughout their respective existences.

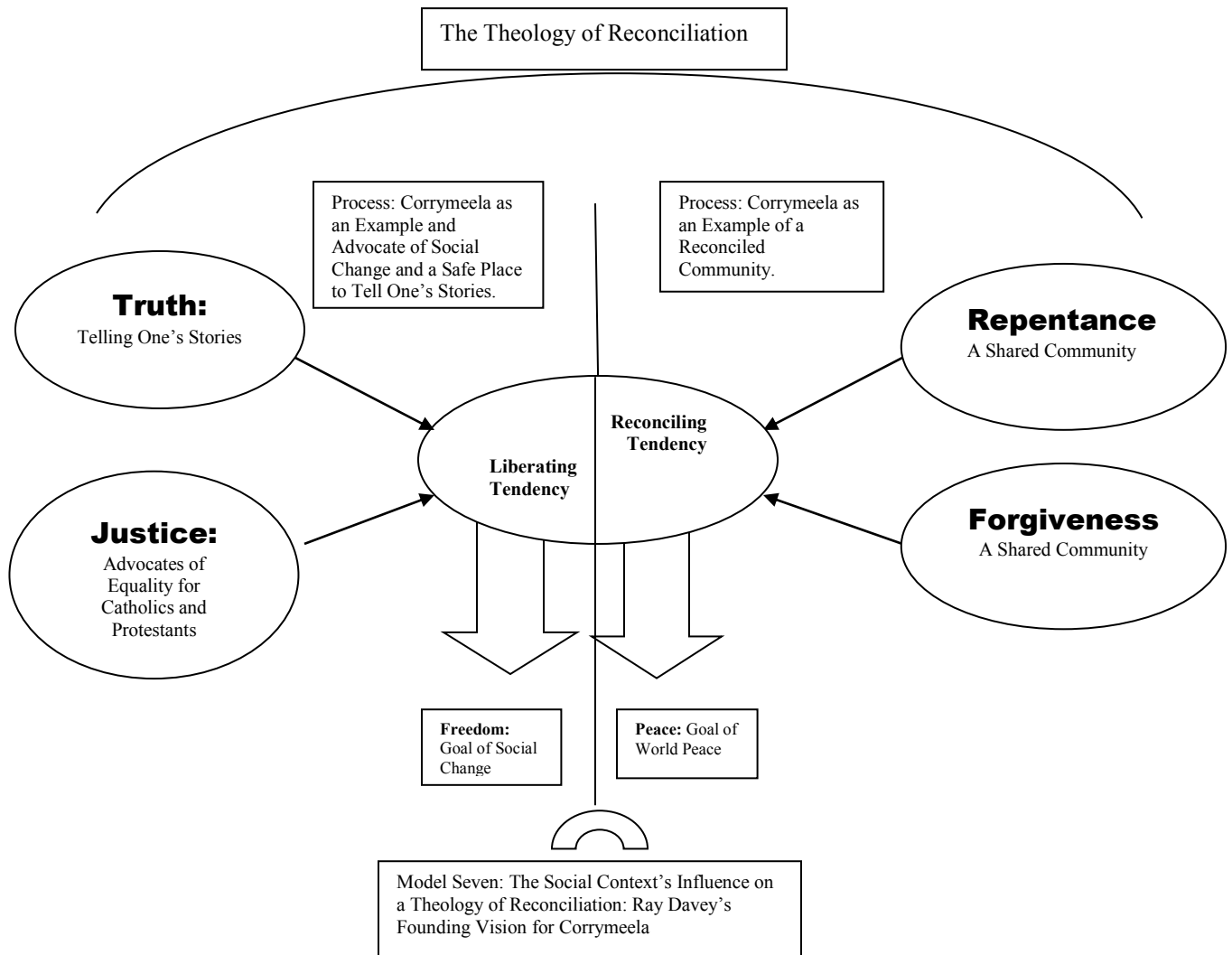
How the Social Context has Influenced the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities

How the Social Context Influenced the Theology of Corrymeela

The following sections will guide the reader through the historical and theological changes in the Corrymeela Community. The changes will be illustrated by three models which show the move between reconciling and liberating tendencies within the theology of reconciliation based on the influence of the social context. The models of the theology of reconciliation visually represent the theological position of the Community throughout various time periods in their history. This section will begin with the foundation of the Community by Ray Davey and will end with the current situation as interpreted from my fieldwork and interviews.

From the beginnings of Corrymeela, Ray Davey adhered to the teachings of George McLeod and Tullio Vinay who understood their Christian faith as undeniably linked to their social world. This understanding of holistic faith, with an emphasis on social transformation,

was embraced by the Community because of the divisive nature of the local church in Northern Ireland during the times of the Troubles. Theology was avoided in the early stages of Corrymeela, and instead Ray Davey adopted an overarching theme of reconciliation under which the Community might exist.⁸⁷⁷



The initial vision of Corrymeela, according to John Morrow, was a hope for the renewal of the church, an emphasis on Christian community, and a goal of world peace and social

⁸⁷⁷ David Stevens explained, “So different Communities can have different charisms, or founding visions, and I think the Corrymeela one was around reconciliation.” David Stevens, Interview by Author, 54.

change.⁸⁷⁸ One can see in the model above that the vision of Corrymeela was a balanced version of reconciling and liberating tendencies where Corrymeela would advocate for social change and serve as an example of a reconciled community. A focus on liberating tendencies saw the Community becoming increasingly involved in advocacy at the national level, and creating cross-community programmes at the local level. Simultaneously, the focus on reconciling tendencies was expressed by members of Corrymeela who were examining their own personal bias and attempting to live in community with others who were not like themselves. The ability to live in community, as such, served as a visual representation of repentance and forgiveness, and those who worked and participated at the Ballycastle centre were asked to be ever aware of what was going on inside themselves for the sake of continued peace within the Community.⁸⁷⁹ Repentance and forgiveness were never forced upon the participants, as this would have surely influenced the safe space that the Community was attempting to create. Thus the reconciling tendency within the theology of reconciliation came from the relationships within the Community during this time period, and was reflected through hospitality, example, and a desire to create a welcoming space for participants to speak about their lives.

The focus by the Community on reconciling and liberating tendencies with the goal of world peace and social change meant that Corrymeela began with a much wider vision of reconciliation that extended beyond the Northern Ireland context. The influence of Ray Davey is apparent in this vision, for he felt deeply the need for world peace based on his service in the

⁸⁷⁸ John Morrow stated, "Part of our earlier vision was about the renewal of the church, the nature of Christian community, the vocation of lay people in the world and the wider issues of world peace and social change." John Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 72.

⁸⁷⁹ Yvonne Naylor discussed that while Corrymeela was existing day-to-day during the Troubles, there was no real emphasis on repentance or forgiveness, but more on the basic tenet of getting to know the "other." The hope was that forgiveness and repentance would occur naturally from this situation. Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 39.

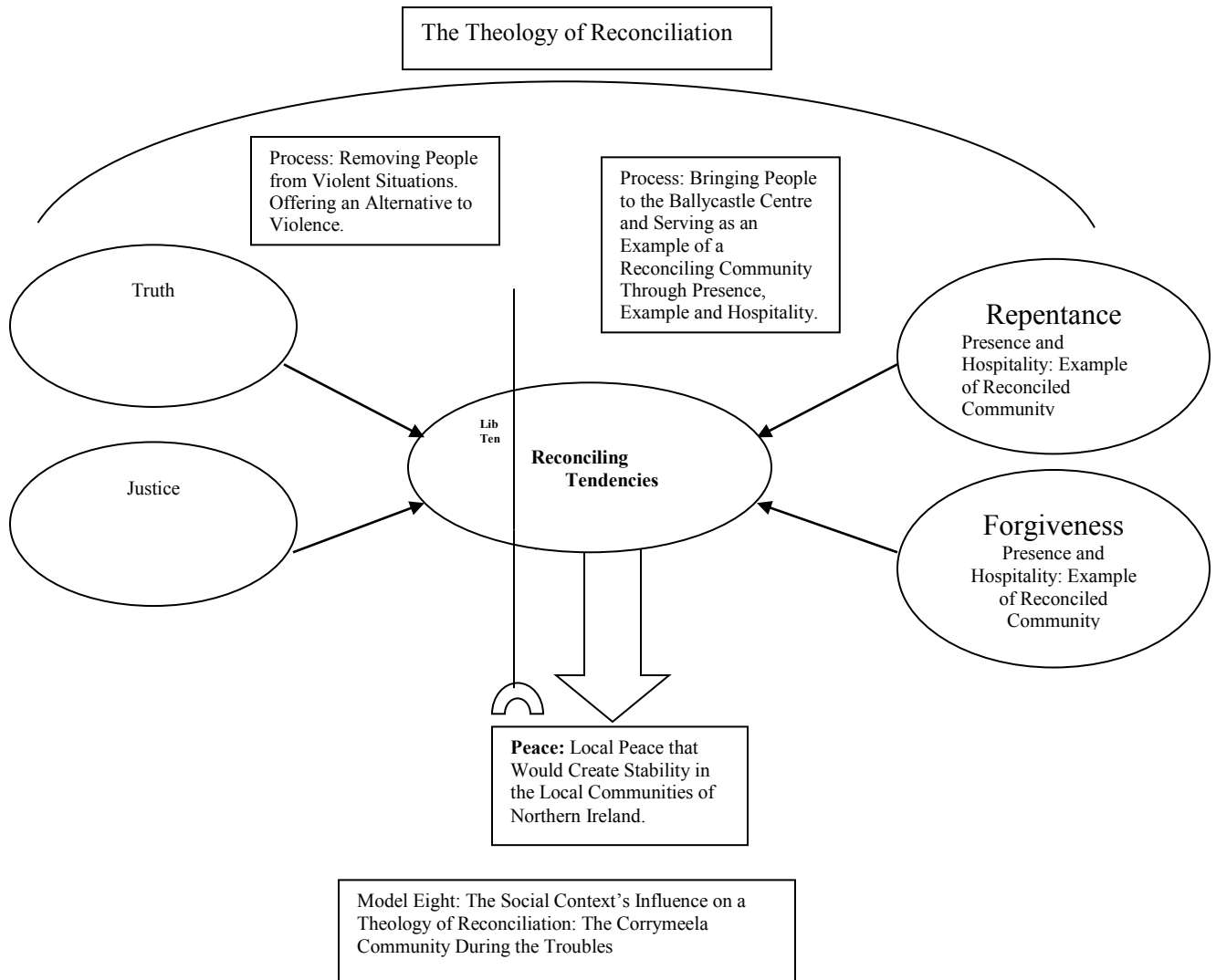
military. So while Davey was concerned with the Northern Ireland context, there was always a desire for his localised movement of reconciliation to serve as inspiration throughout the world.

The social climate, during the early 1960s, was that of progressive reforms and movements towards Catholic civil rights. The Church was seen by many at the local level as not advocating reconciliation, but Davey believed that through the creation of Corrymeela there could be a place that honoured both the liberating need for freedom and the reconciling desire for peace.⁸⁸⁰ The stable atmosphere of the early 1960s, when Corrymeela was created, gave the Community the confidence to create a vision that incorporated equal amounts of liberating and reconciling tendencies within their theology of reconciliation. This included advocating social justice and maintaining a continued focus on what it meant to live as a reconciled Community in Northern Ireland.

Almost as soon as Corrymeela was created, the Troubles began, and what started as a hopeful vision of a reconciled future that was seemingly well on its way to reality, turned towards violence at the end of the 1960s. The result was a change in theological understandings towards a more localised view of reconciliation whereby the overall goal of a sustained peace in Northern Ireland replaced the previous goal of world peace. The idea of radical social change was placed in the background as a need for simple social stability became the utmost goal. The process of reconciliation that Corrymeela adopted during this time period involved taking

⁸⁸⁰ The words in each of the bubbles represent the way each community understood this particular concept at this time in their respective histories. The boxes are the practical means by which they attempted the liberating or reconciling tendencies. The arrows represent the goals of both the liberating and reconciling tendencies within the theology of reconciliation. It cannot be over emphasised that these are not the only means by which truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness might have been understood in each Community. It is also important to say that this is not an attempt at a definitive understanding of these concepts, but simply an interpretation of the historical understandings of the theology of reconciliation based on literature, interviews and field research during a particular time period. See the Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation, 61.

people out of their violent, local situations and placing them in a hospitable atmosphere.⁸⁸¹ This required that those who were volunteering at the centre work tirelessly to maintain the example of Corrymeela as a reconciled community. This is represented in the model below where one can see the shift from a balanced vision of reconciling and liberating tendencies towards that of reconciling tendencies.



⁸⁸¹ This process is described in detail by Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 38. She worked at the centre during the Troubles and helped take people out of areas of violence and helped to establish programmes once they were at Corrymeela. Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 40.

While not reflecting the entirety of the Troubles at Corrymeela, this model displays the time period during the height of these violent times, when the Community was forced to abandon their established programmes for a more pragmatic approach to reconciliation. Truth and justice, during this time period, were largely ignored while the idea of projecting a reconciling presence became the main activity at the centre. During this time period, the Community brought people out of their respective neighbourhoods to Ballycastle to help them escape the violence. Those who were working at Corrymeela at the time expressed the importance of being seen by the local level as an example of both a reconciling presence but also as hospitable to anyone who came to the centre.⁸⁸² It was a continued assumption from the pre-Trouble era that period that repentance and forgiveness should not be forced upon participants, especially those who were coming to Ballycastle to escape violence. This resulted in repentance and forgiveness as seen through the Community working together, creating a peaceful atmosphere for those coming to the centre. Repentance and forgiveness between members of the Community, which resulted in a peaceful atmosphere, served as the stability for those who were escaping areas of violence.

Despite the fact that repentance and forgiveness were not forced upon those people who were at the centre during the height of the Troubles, there was a sense that peace was the primary goal of the Community. This understanding of peace differed from the pre-Troubles era, as it focused primarily on local peace, both amongst members of Corrymeela and those coming to the centre to escape violence. This version of peace moves the model away from the pre-Troubles understanding of peace as global to that of local peace and illustrates how the loss

⁸⁸² Yvonne Naylor describes how the local level saw the Corrymeela Community during this time, “[The local communities] didn’t feel threatened by [Corrymeela], they trusted what was happening, they knew that the family and parents got a lot out of it and felt safe. People knew that it was a good place to go and meet people and learn things.” Yvonne Naylor, Interview by Author, 38.

of stability at the local level influenced the ways that those working at Corrymeela understood the vision of their Community.

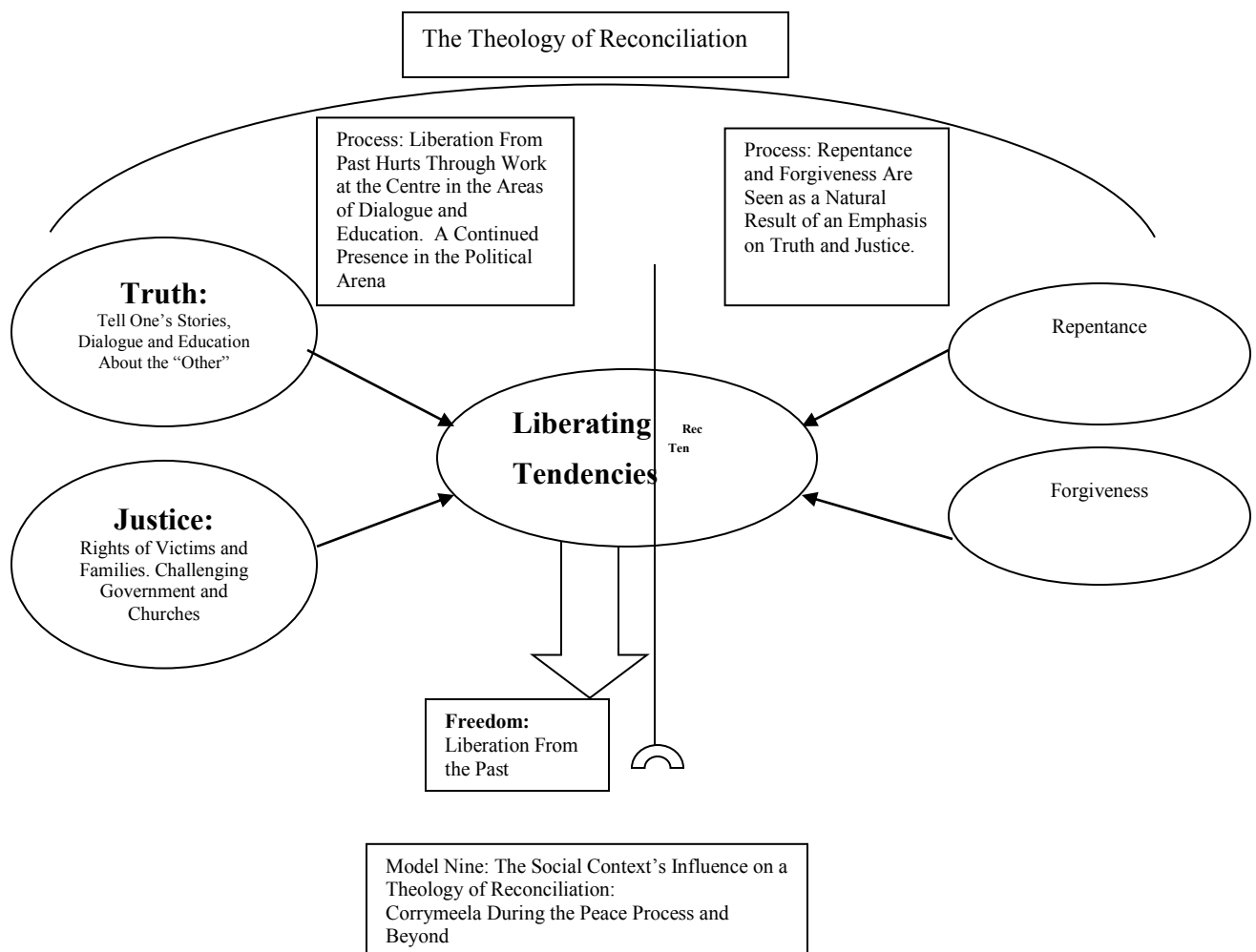
As the Troubles continued into the mid 1980s, Corrymeela maintained their focus predominately on a localised goal of peace. As Maria Power describes, “By 1985 they [Corrymeela] were beginning to ground themselves firmly within a Northern Ireland context rather than in the general terms witnessed at their foundation.”⁸⁸³ Thus, as the Troubles continued, and as the Community focused on reconciling tendencies, Corrymeela members began to see themselves as having the ability to influence not only local churches, but the local level in general. This is reflected in the Community’s vision statement from 1985, “To be a sign and a symbol in a divided society that Protestant and Catholic can share together in a common witness to Christ who transcends our divisions and leads us towards a large vision of reconciliation; to be a question mark to the existing structures of churches in Ireland.”⁸⁸⁴

In a post-Troubles era, Corrymeela gained the social stability it needed to regain its pre-Troubles stance towards the theology of reconciliation. As opposed to the time period during the Troubles where people came to the centre largely to escape violent situations, established programmes were developed and various local groups began to plan trips to the centre. The Community began to create programmes that focused on post-war issues such as identity, trauma, and death. Corrymeela also became increasingly involved in politics and social change through the implementation of project workers in the local Belfast area. As their vision of reconciliation widened, they began welcoming international groups to the Ballycastle centre, along with employing international volunteers.

⁸⁸³ Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 122.

⁸⁸⁴ John Morrow quoted in Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 122.

Another new development during the time period leading from the Troubles to the present day was an increased emphasis on the open village mentality that was advocated by Ray Davey when he first created Corrymeela. This could be interpreted as a movement back to the liberating tendencies that were de-emphasised during the height of the Troubles. Corrymeela began hosting politicians at Ballycastle and challenging public thought concerning reconciliation in the Northern Ireland government. Along with this move towards the political realm there was also an increased international presence within the Corrymeela Community, seen in new members, workers and volunteers from different cultural and religious backgrounds.



This model reflects the Community's move away from reconciling tendencies towards liberating tendencies. There is a feeling, post-peace process that the Corrymeela Community is moving back towards global goals of peace and freedom. This, along with an increased inter-faith staff, mean that repentance and forgiveness, which are oftentimes associated more with Christianity than truth and justice, are progressively downplayed in the programmes at Corrymeela. This is best reflected by a discussion on Northern Ireland by Alan Torrance:

The tendency has been to suggest that the essential socio-political contribution of Christianity is to be conceived not in terms of reconciliation and forgiveness but in terms of justice and liberation-concepts whose advocacy is considerably less problematic and that most can appreciate, endorse, and admire. Reconciliation is left to natural processes.⁸⁸⁵

The Community's goal, from the time period of the peace process to present, is a return to a focus on liberating ideas such as social justice, which was historically one of the two original goals of Corrymeela when Ray Davey created the Community. There is a sense that global peace, Davey's other original goal, is also important to the Community, but there is a greater emphasis on an interpretation of liberating tendencies through the social justice realm. Repentance and forgiveness, as such, have seemingly come to be interpreted in the Community as something that takes place in the personal or spiritual realm. Thus, repentance and forgiveness are personal choices that cannot be forced and take place as a natural progression from liberating tendencies. This way of seeing reconciling tendencies means that those who work within the Community are hesitant to talk at length about what repentance and forgiveness means for anyone else other than themselves. They are more likely to give explanations about

⁸⁸⁵ Torrance, *The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm*, 22.

programmes that advocate the liberating side of the theology of reconciliation, and attribute repentance and forgiveness to natural progressions.

There is a sense that this internalisation of repentance and forgiveness might be a push back against the forced reconciling tendencies advocated by the government during the peace process and beyond, and also the continued debates in Northern Ireland concerning historical truth and appropriate means of justice. Repentance and forgiveness are best seen, according to those at Corrymeela, in the lives of the individuals who make up the Community, as opposed to being forced on those participating at the centre.

Another result of the de-emphasis on repentance and forgiveness is that it opens up the Community to an interfaith community. If we make the assumption that repentance and forgiveness are prominent concepts in the Christian faith and that their success is based on an acknowledgement of rights and wrongs, it is not surprising that there is a parallel to the downplay in reconciling tendencies and the increased number of those working, volunteering and participating at Corrymeela who are not of a Christian background.

One result of the continued evolution away from reconciling tendencies in Corrymeela is that theology was avoided in most of my conversations in the individual interviews. There was a theme, however, from a theological perspective, on the servant-style understanding of Jesus' life on earth.⁸⁸⁶ This understanding of Christ was described through practical themes such as volunteering and the creation of safe spaces. When discussing these subjects, interviewees referenced the importance of a humbled, servant-like Jesus in their personal work in reconciliation. There is a need, according to some of the interviewees, to put aside one's personal history in order to work in an organisation such as Corrymeela. This view also

⁸⁸⁶ For example, Centre Director Ronnie Millar: "So I found a place in that gathering of people and I became a deacon actually, a servant. I was deeply impressed with how Jesus served others and I became very involved [in his local church]." Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 26.

emerges in the corporate understanding of Corrymeela, which tried to de-emphasise the dividing theological debates of their times for a more uniformly agreed understanding of reconciliation.

The idea of attempting to present oneself as neutral occurred throughout the interviews.⁸⁸⁷ The emphasis on neutrality seemed to reflect the ways in which repentance and forgiveness had evolved in Corrymeela members. If a Corrymeela worker has repented and is forgiven, or vice versa, with his or her “other” he or she is a representation of neutrality. With this neutrality the members are then able to project a version of a reconciled Community with which they might help create a safe space for others. What is interesting about this understanding of repentance and forgiveness is that it does not require those who participate at the Ballycastle centre to go to such an extreme. Members, volunteers, and workers should be neutral, but participants are allowed to pursue liberating tendencies which could cause hard conversations or debates. Repentance and forgiveness, as suggested earlier, are left to natural processes for participants.

From my own perspective, the present-day result of this evolution towards repentance and forgiveness as a natural process, while focusing on a more easily-agreed upon understanding of liberating tendencies, is best seen by examining the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit at Corrymeela. Ronnie Millar, current centre director discusses the Holy Spirit: “I think there is something about practicing the presence of God and that we know that the presence of God is all around us, and I think there is a practice involved in that.”⁸⁸⁸ This emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the constant presence of God at the centre seems to be one way

⁸⁸⁷ Specifically in the interview with Project Worker Ciara McFarlane: “So I guess a lot of them [participants] see Corrymeela as being this neutral space and this neutral people who can come in and it doesn’t matter who or what they are. I think that’s really the essence of Corrymeela is that it’s perceived to be a neutral space for people.” Ciara McFarlane, Interview by Author, 21.

⁸⁸⁸ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 27.

that those who are in the middle ground (faith-based and employed)⁸⁸⁹ are coping with the increasingly interfaith nature of participants at the centre.⁸⁹⁰ There is the possibility, through focusing on the Holy Spirit that those who are Christian may continue to work alongside those who are not and feel that the centre still represents their theological beliefs. Likewise, as described by Yvonne Naylor, there is a feeling that the spirits of the past leaders and workers are still present, spurring on the work that goes on at Corrymeela despite not being physically present at the Community.⁸⁹¹ This idea is best illustrated by the way that the interviewees spoke of Ray Davey, though no longer an everyday figure at the Ballycastle centre, as one who was actively working alongside members, volunteers and workers, religious or not. These invisible presences, whether holy or earth bound, are indications that despite the changing social and religious situation in Northern Ireland there is a desire to maintain the original vision of the Community.

With the idea that the current Community members have a desire to maintain a vision from past leaders, there is a move towards examining the social context's influence upon the theology of reconciliation at Corrymeela in a different way. Along with the social context which, as stated in Chapter Two, involves both the local and national levels of society, there is also the reality of the Corrymeela Community itself as a social context that serves as an influence on the corporate theological understandings of the group. The following section discusses how Corrymeela as a social context has influenced the overall theological understanding of the Community.

⁸⁸⁹ See Jo Watson's description of the middle ground in Chapter Four: The Corrymeela Community, 192.

⁸⁹⁰ Interfaith participants and volunteers are becoming an important aspect to Corrymeela. David Stevens adds: "I think now these sorts of issues of how we understand faith and Christ are becoming more complicated. And we are obviously in sort of an interfaith, interfaith world, or at least issues of the awareness of other faiths here becomes more obvious. Should they not be part of the community?" David Stevens, Interview by Author, 58.

⁸⁹¹ See section on Yvonne Naylor, Chapter Four: The Corrymeela Community, 210.

How Corrymeela as a Social Context Influenced the Corporate Theology of Corrymeela

The connection between the corporate theology of Corrymeela and those individuals who work, volunteer or support the centre can be summarised into two aspects: the initial vision of Ray Davey and the outreach activities that the Community provides. Davey became fascinated with the idea of Christian community and the impact that it could have at a national and local level. This has remained a steadfast belief by those who are associated with Corrymeela, and throughout this research, Ray Davey was discussed in every single interview from the Community. Somehow, despite differences of opinion from within the Community on how Corrymeela should be maintained, Davey's ideas on reconciliation and community were consistently seen as the most important overall vision for Corrymeela.

The simplicity of Davey's beliefs on reconciliation and community, along with his emphasis on inclusiveness, means that today those who work at Corrymeela who do not have a faith-based understanding of reconciliation or are from a non-Christian faith tradition are still able to work for the initial vision of an open village.⁸⁹² Those who do understand reconciliation from a Christian perspective but have been jaded by the local church are offered an alternative means of expressing their faith through practical work in reconciliation while working at the Ballycastle centre and participating in local cell groups. Similarly, those who are Christian and are active in the local church are able to adhere to the vision of Davey, who hoped that Corrymeela would serve as inspiration to local congregations.

On a practical level, the activities that take place at the Ballycastle centre and out of the Belfast office are a strong connecting force for Corrymeela as a whole. The centre is the one

⁸⁹² See Chapter Four: The Corrymeela Community, 192.

place where, on any given day, one might see all the different groups that exist within Corrymeela in one place. A member is at the centre each week as a spiritual “presence,” and as an extra help when needed. Friends of Corrymeela hold regular meetings at the centre to hear about Community updates, and likewise the Belfast project workers and those employed in the office are periodically present at the centre. Living in Ballycastle are the volunteers, the centre director and all those who work to maintain the centre. The centre is, therefore, the connection between the work that is occurring in all the different facets within Corrymeela. Accordingly, all of those connected to Corrymeela contribute directly to the programmes that occur at Ballycastle in some way, whether it is through funding, planning, or implementation.⁸⁹³

While the Corrymeela Community has many theological connections amongst workers, volunteers and members that aid in its continued success, there are differing beliefs within the organisation. These beliefs are often seen in the many layers that exist within the Community. What follows is by no means an all-encompassing view of the beliefs of those within Corrymeela, but it does offer some generalised insights into the Community.

On one level there exist the leader and the head council, whose theological views are oftentimes expressed on a corporate level through the vision and aims of the Community. The members of Corrymeela represent an almost exclusive Christian base, and many have been around since the beginning of Corrymeela.⁸⁹⁴ They are committed to the original vision of Ray Davey, and some find it hard to embrace the idea of any work beyond the traditional Catholic

⁸⁹³ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁸⁹⁴ Emma Cowan, “But I like the fact that you don’t necessarily have to be some Bible believing, card-carrying, or whatever else to be a part of the Community, [but] to be a member of the Community it does require an affirmation of faith commitment.” Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 12.

and Protestant projects.⁸⁹⁵ Alternatively, there are some members whose theological beliefs have led them to understand that a religiously pluralistic viewpoint is, in fact, a way of reconciling.⁸⁹⁶ In the Belfast office are the project workers who have a very practical mindset when it comes to theology, and included in this category are some project workers that do not adhere to any particular religion and thus do not attribute their work in reconciliation as being faith-based.⁸⁹⁷ The volunteers are the most diverse group, as they range across a wide variety of ages, races, countries and religions. Their group is difficult to generalise because there are those volunteers who believe strongly in the Christian understanding of reconciliation and believe that the Community is giving up on its Christian heritage. Conversely, there are those who feel out of place because of the emphasis on Christianity at Corrymeela, and who feel as though the Community is not inclusive enough.⁸⁹⁸ This is, it appears, the historical story of Corrymeela, for it has always battled with the inclusive and exclusive nature of Christian theology. This problem, from a theological perspective, is best described by David Stevens:

There are particular grammars, and I think that people do not see the problems of particularity. Not everybody is the same, not all faiths are the same, they are making different truth claims and so on. What would an interfaith Community look like? There are serious issues. Who are we worshipping? But nevertheless, our world is deep into inclusion. And that is a necessary. What is the balance between inclusion and particularity: diversity. Those are some of the big debates of our age. And the danger is you become nothing in trying to be inclusive.⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁵ David Stevens, “So there’s a whole series of changes that have come together here and a changing Northern Ireland where the issues, and of course people, have been formed by experiences in the 70s and 80s and they want some of those things to continue. Which is absolutely right, but they may not be able to continue in the ways they were. And that is very difficult and painful for people to hear and to act on.” David Stevens, Interview by Author, 56.

⁸⁹⁶ This emerged through informal conversations with members. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁸⁹⁷ This emerged through interviews with Corrymeela project workers.

⁸⁹⁸ Based on informal conversations with the 2009 volunteer staff, Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁸⁹⁹ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 58.

The balancing act between being inclusive and Christian will inevitably continue within Corrymeela, and thus serve as an important means of influence within the theology of the Community. The very nature of the Community as both a religious and non-profit organisation, which requires members to confess to being Christian, but by law must be inclusive in hiring workers and volunteers, sets up a diverse situation where motivations toward reconciliation vary. This has led to a simplistic or vague recognition of the Christian nature of the centre and the Community, but a fairly uniform view on the practical themes of reconciliation (safe space, story-telling, neutral space, and volunteering).⁹⁰⁰

As we move to the next case study, the following section will discuss the same theme of historical and theological development for the Cornerstone Community. This development will be slightly different, as the Cornerstone Community did not exist as early as the Corrymeela Community, but instead was established in the 1980s. The theology of reconciliation models, introduced in Chapter Two of this research, will again be used to analyse the impact of the social context on the theology of reconciliation of the Cornerstone Community.

How the Social Context Influenced the Theology of Cornerstone

To examine the way the social context has influenced the theology of reconciliation at Cornerstone is less a historical analysis and more a geographical one. The Cornerstone Community differs greatly from the Corrymeela Community in terms of geography, as Cornerstone is located in the city of Belfast on the peacelines between two strongly Catholic and Protestant groups. While the Corrymeela Community changed throughout its history, beginning with pre-Troubles to today, the Cornerstone Community, established in the midst of

⁹⁰⁰ See Chapter Four: The Corrymeela Community, 220.

the Troubles, shows no evidence of such a change in its theological understanding of reconciliation. One might raise the point that this disproves the idea that social context influences the theology of reconciliation, but upon closer inspection we can see that it is a result of the local level of the social context that Cornerstone has remained steadfast in its theological beliefs.

Cornerstone, existing in such a volatile area, has had little in the way of local community stability, despite the peace process. While it must be said that violence has decreased in this area since the Troubles, Cornerstone is still located between two groups who are, at any given moment, on the edge of violence.⁹⁰¹ This constant threat of instability has influenced Cornerstone in a way that Corrymeela has not experienced. While Corrymeela was able to settle back into a relatively peaceful geographic area post-Troubles, Cornerstone has existed in a neighbourhood with a somewhat constant state of unrest. This is reflected in the Community's theological understandings of reconciliation. Where Corrymeela's social context changed from stable to unstable, so did its emphasis on liberating and reconciling tendencies. Cornerstone, however, has maintained its emphasis on reconciling tendencies with the hope that they might create an example of a peace-oriented, cross-community endeavour.

Accordingly, this means that Cornerstone has had a much more constant theology of reconciliation, and as a result its members have been able to explore more deeply their understandings of the connection between faith and the social context. Though the concepts of justice, truth, repentance and forgiveness as traditionally understood are not discussed, as such, at great lengths there are several implied uses. The concept of truth, expressed through discussions on mutual understanding by Cornerstone members, is a foundational aspect to the

⁹⁰¹ When I first arrived at Cornerstone, the shootings at the Massereene Barracks had taken place a week before. Members of Cornerstone and those in the local Springfield area were constantly on edge as riots, petrol bombs and bomb threats were a cause of distress in the local area. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

Community. Furthermore, mutual understanding was likened to the theological idea of the Trinity in several interviews. This is best explained by member Gerry Reynolds: “We’re not in full communion, but we’re in real communion. The people of the Protestant churches are not separate from us [Catholics] but we are bonded together in the mystery of the church and the mystery of the trinity, created out of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’s involvement with us.”⁹⁰² From within the house this idea of mutual understanding is exemplified by the weekly activities of the members that include debates and discussions which hope to further break down previously held beliefs by members and create new ones in their place. This has been the case since before Cornerstone was an actual organisation, for the idea of mutual understanding between two separate groups is what first brought together the founding members.⁹⁰³

Repentance and forgiveness are again not mentioned in detail. At first glance it appears that these two concepts are not a part of the Cornerstone theology at all. There are, however, references to the two concepts in a less direct way. One of the main ideas behind Cornerstone is that it might serve as an example of reconciliation. The Springfield Road house is one way that the Community is able to accomplish this goal, by way of opening their doors indiscriminately to their local area.⁹⁰⁴ This example of reconciliation has, seemingly, involved the members of Cornerstone doing a great deal of repentance and forgiveness on a personal level as well as between fellow members.

Serving as an example means that the group has had to resolve issues from within the

⁹⁰² Gerry Reynolds, Interview by Author, 52.

⁹⁰³ See Chapter Five: The Cornerstone Community, 231.

⁹⁰⁴ A vision statement in the Cornerstone magazine stated: “Cornerstone is an inter-church community of reconciliation based in North and West Belfast, seeking through witness, prayer, outreach and hospitality to be a healing presence and a sign of hope.” The Cornerstone Community, “The Way Forward,” 2.

Community before they were able to claim to be reconciled presence.⁹⁰⁵ The difficult journey of forgiveness and repentance within the Community is present in many of the stories that were told by individual members concerning their own bias. Alongside the stories of trauma and pain were descriptions of how the Community helped individual members gain control over anger associated with past hurts.⁹⁰⁶ Actively practicing forgiveness and repentance has thus allowed them to come in contact with paramilitary groups and political figures without incident.⁹⁰⁷ Likewise, they are seen by the local community as being neither Protestant nor Catholic, but just as a Christian group.⁹⁰⁸ This level of local neutrality has occurred because of the work that the members have done to address their personal struggles and consequently, learning to live in a diverse community setting.

The word *justice* was not mentioned by any members of the Community at any time during the interviews. It is also hard to equate any activities or understandings of reconciliation by the members to justice. Though, as illustrated in both Communities, there seemed to be ways that implied uses of the concepts within reconciliation were used, at Cornerstone justice seemed to be actively avoided. Where Corrymeela has begun to de-emphasise repentance and forgiveness, Cornerstone seems to actively be de-emphasising discussions on justice, in any form of this complicated word.

⁹⁰⁵ Tom Hannon explains: "I have been asked this question at conferences: 'How do we [Cornerstone] pray together in community, and not have confrontations?' I say, 'We do have confrontation. Who borrowed the Sellotape and didn't leave it back?' I said, 'This is what community life is about! Who left the kitchen in that state!' I said, 'That's what living in community is all about.' You are a religious community with all the warts and boils and sores of any people living together." Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 38.

⁹⁰⁶ A consistent theme with those interviewed at Cornerstone was that many of the members had experienced violence on a personal or family level during the Troubles.

⁹⁰⁷ Isabel Hunter on having members of paramilitary groups in the Springfield Road house: "I felt very sad for them when I realised that their eyes really told their sadness, their inner sadness or whatever they were feeling." Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 47.

⁹⁰⁸ Tom Hannon offers an example: "The man who came to fix the man hole in street one evening was calling in to his office and he said, 'We are just outside the Holy House.' And I thought to myself, 'I hope that's right.'" Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 36.

The theology of reconciliation model for Cornerstone is based heavily on interviews with members of Cornerstone. Of particular interest are quotes by Community members concerning unity and presence:

I would like the churches all to feel like they are part of a family. Well, alright, we're different, and we maybe have different worship forms or sing different hymns or have different practices, but we all belong to the same family. And that we have the one mission, and that is to reconcile the world to God, and to build the Kingdom of God here on earth as near as we can. Therefore we ought to be helping one another and assisting one another.⁹⁰⁹

But I think we still have some things to do, just be a presence here, and we do try and bring people together in the house, Catholic and Protestant...I think it is really to just be a presence of Catholic and Protestant, a welcoming presence."⁹¹⁰

One of the lines one of the mottos [of the Community is]: "It's a healing presence in a divided area." It's a house that's there if people need it, and it's a statement in itself that people actually want peace."⁹¹¹

Cornerstone, because of its consistent focus on reconciling tendencies only has one model throughout its history. What should be noted, however, is that while Cornerstone consistently focused on reconciling tendencies they did *attempt* to delve into liberating tendencies from time to time. These attempts were short-lived and sporadic, and were never the focus of the Community for long periods of time. Examples of this included hosting politicians at the Springfield Road house for public discussions, where the members of Cornerstone challenged government officials on subjects of truth and justice. These meetings were stopped abruptly due

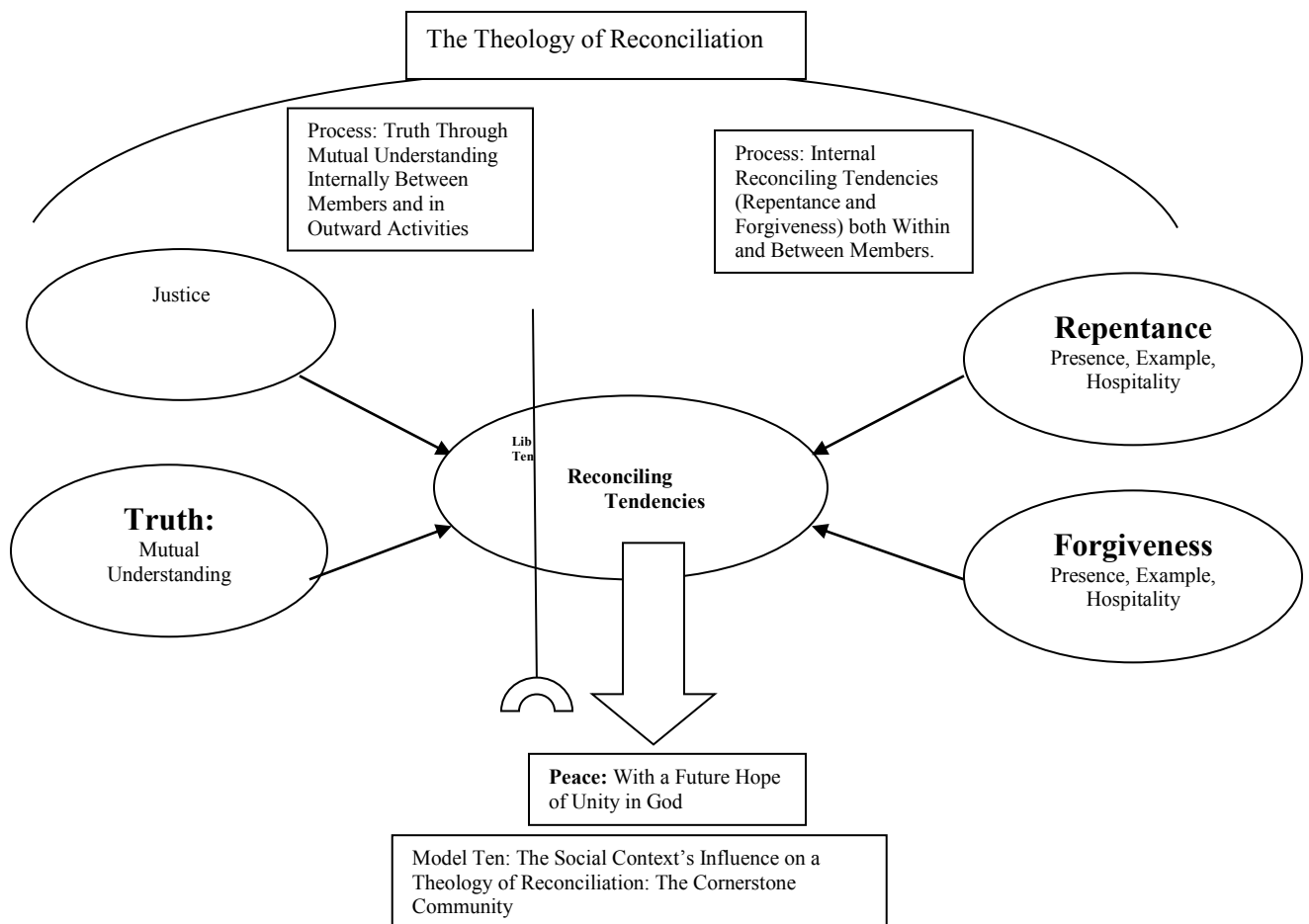
⁹⁰⁹ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 14.

⁹¹⁰ Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 46 and 48.

⁹¹¹ Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 6.

to the dangers that the politicians felt having their meetings in such a divided area.⁹¹² So, while the sliding scale did move to liberating tendencies, it was not there for long and it certainly was never the main focus of the group.

Therefore despite its static state theologically, the social context still consistently influenced the theology of reconciliation at Cornerstone by creating a local level that did not serve as stable enough to attempt liberating tendencies on a long-term scale. The sliding scale, therefore, for the historical entirety of the Cornerstone Community, would have an emphasis on the reconciling tendencies, because of the Community's overwhelming desire to serve as an example of repentance and forgiveness as well as their overall goal of unity.



⁹¹² Isabel Hunter explained, “We had meetings with Sinn Fein, and then Sinn Fein members began to feel very unsafe here because of the Protestant element behind them, so they asked if they could meet us at Clonard [church].” Isabel Hunter, Interview by Author, 46.

The main theological theme for the Cornerstone Community, as evident from the model, is the desire to recreate what they believe to be the Kingdom of God on earth.⁹¹³ Therefore, all of their theological activities both internally (within the Springfield Road house) and externally (outside the Springfield Road house) reflect this belief. Thus, their main point of contention is deciding what external activities best match this Kingdom mentality. They have focused on being a reconciled, hospitable presence as their primary work within the community, though it is still secondary to the continued cross-community work between members of Cornerstone themselves. This is, perhaps, a result of Cornerstone's focus on prayer, as many members stated that unity in Northern Ireland could only be achieved through and in God. Therefore, though Cornerstone hopes to aid the community, it does not believe that peace or unity can be forced. This has resulted in a group of people who has focused on the internal, spiritual aspects of reconciliation. They have specialised on working through repentance and forgiveness on an individual, spiritual level via their own interactions with God. Accordingly, they have then attempted to work out repentance and forgiveness amongst one another through cross-community Bible studies and worship services inside the house. Their success within the Community at remaining focused on reconciling tendencies created an atmosphere where the focal point is hospitality, example and presence. The outward projects of Cornerstone have proven less successful than their internal success at living in community amongst one another.

If one returns to the main research question, of how does the local context influence the development of a theology of reconciliation, for the Cornerstone Community, the local context has been the greatest influence on their personal theology. They have, because of their

⁹¹³ As defined by Sam Burch: "We have the one mission and that is to reconcile the world to God and to build the Kingdom of God here on earth as near as we can." Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 14.

experiences in this community, worked on the reconciling tendencies that exist within the theology of reconciliation. They are focused on being reconcilers because they have seen their churches fail. They have focused on mutual understanding amongst one another because they know how important that is to a peaceful society. They believe that the only way towards unity is through the common connecting factor of God, and their hope is for a Kingdom of God on earth, both with their members and with the local community.

Like the section on the Corrymeela Community, these theological understandings within the Community move the research in a different direction. Along with the social context which, as stated in Chapter Two, involves both the local and national levels of society, there is also the reality of the Cornerstone Community itself as a social context that serves as an influence on the corporate theological understandings of the group. The following section discusses how Cornerstone as a social context has influenced the overall theological understanding of the Community.

How Cornerstone as a Social Context Influenced the Corporate Theology of Cornerstone

The thing that links Cornerstone is this vision for a reconciled community. They long for God's people to be an instrument for healing and reconciling. And they've had to come out of their own churches to do it. As I said, it was this [Cornerstone's goal] that the churches could be instruments of God to bring about reconciliation. They go back to their own congregations and play a significant part in their own congregations, trying to promote that vision. Some more successful. They have helped the churches to become a little bit more ecumenical and have a vision for a more normal society where the old tribal divisions are not as hard.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹⁴ Sam Burch, Interview by Author, 59.

Unlike the members that make up Corrymeela, the Cornerstone Community does not represent such a diversity of theological beliefs. It has the benefit of most of its original, founding members still working within the Community. These members also share a very similar personal history when it comes to growing up in the Shankill or Falls-Springfield area. In essence, they are people who grew up in the community, live in the community, go to church in the community, work in the community and attempt reconciliation in the community. They are insiders working from the inside in one of the most divided neighbourhoods in the Northern Ireland, so despite the fact that of those interviewed three are Protestant and four are Catholic they appear to have strikingly similar views on the theology of reconciliation. The diagram below shows the similarity of views of the Community and its members:

Christian duty \implies mutual understanding \implies unity in God \implies a Kingdom of God on earth

Diagram Two: The Agreed Upon Theological Themes at Cornerstone

Where the Community connects is in its view of reconciliation as being the utmost duty of the Christian faith.⁹¹⁵ According to those at Cornerstone, to be Christian is to be a reconciler because of God's reconciliation with humanity. The second aspect of this duty is the need for mutual understanding between those of different denominations within the Christian faith. Cornerstone finds this idea of mutual understanding to be important in the context of Northern Ireland because of the constant encouragement of misunderstanding by politicians-parents-peers

⁹¹⁵ Sam Bright: "I think everyone is called in a way. I wouldn't say I have a special calling to work in this, but I think as a Christian it's a duty more than a call." Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 4. Gerardine Connolly: "But it's our Christian duty, it should be on our conscience that we should work as much as possible towards bringing all peoples together, not just Christians, but all peoples together for harmony." Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 20.

and the media. The process of breaking through the wall of misunderstanding, according to some members of Cornerstone, is to liken their actions under a Trinitarian world view. The Trinitarian understanding of reconciliation means acknowledging the commonalities that Protestants and Catholics have and at the same time allowing for diversity.⁹¹⁶ This “dance,”⁹¹⁷ as one member named it, involves maintaining a balancing act between commonality and difference. This is a process that the Community has tried to create from within, thus establishing what they would see as a Kingdom of God on earth. This is, perhaps, one of the key ways that Cornerstone itself has influenced the theology of reconciliation within the Community. They are not, and do not claim to be, a completely reconciled group. This continued struggle with establishing a Kingdom of God on earth, which is acceptable to the members and influential to the public, is an ongoing process.

One possible reason that the Community continues to focus on reconciling tendencies within the Springfield Road house is the oftentimes intense⁹¹⁸ debates amongst members concerning the future of Cornerstone. The practical implication of reconciliation, or how the Christian idea of reconciliation is used in the social realm, is a point of divergence in the Community. If we look at the diagram below, the point of contention is the theme of mutual understanding. In some of the members’ eyes, being an example of the possibility of a reconciled group to the local community is enough in the way of showing mutual understanding. For others, mutual understanding requires delving into the world outside Cornerstone. The idea that the people who need to see the example of Cornerstone might not

⁹¹⁶ “The persons of the Trinity and their oneness it’s a dynamic act of love, a dance of love, an inter-relationship, and we as Christians should be taking that as our model, and if we’re going to spend this eternity in this relationship we have to start doing it now.” Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 20-1.

⁹¹⁷ Gerardine Connolly, Interview by Author, 20.

⁹¹⁸ This was seen during my field work when the “Time for Reconciliation” project ended, as there was a big disruption in the Community and it was apparent that some members were extremely dissatisfied with the decision to end the project prematurely. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

come to the Community voluntarily is some members' argument against a theology of reconciliation that focuses only on interactions within the Springfield Road house.⁹¹⁹ So in a sense it creates a diagram that looks more like this:

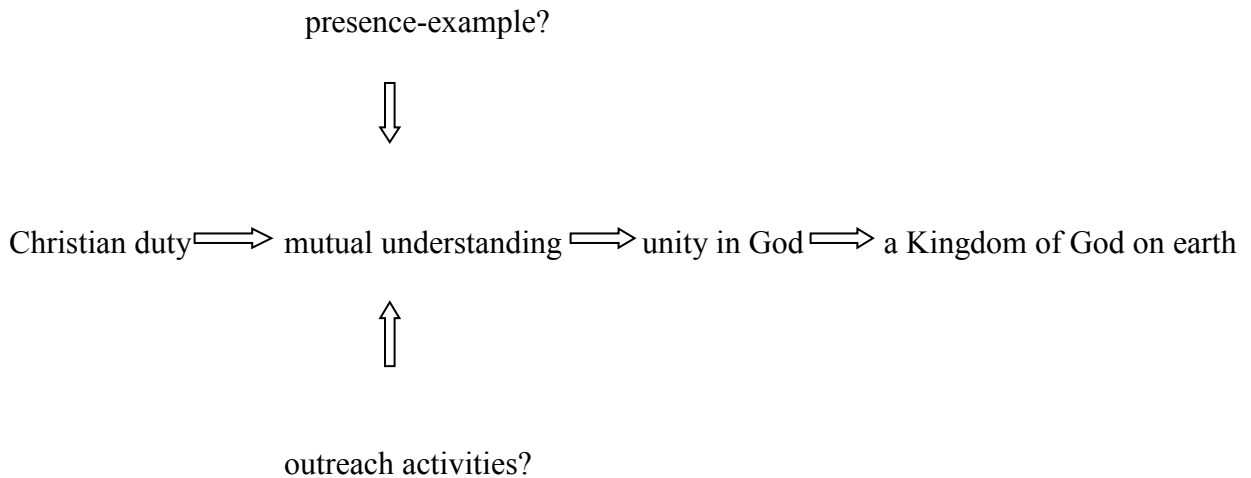


Diagram Three: The Debated Future of Cornerstone

The extent to which Cornerstone should fund outreach initiatives was discussed to a great extent during my time there because of the recent ending of “A Time for Reconciliation”⁹²⁰ project. This project began at one example in the history of the Community where the sliding scale moved from reconciling to liberating tendencies. “A Time for Reconciliation” project’s aims were focused on allowing people space to speak about their past, even if it was uncomfortable, with those in the “other” group. These conversations were to take place over dinner, hosted at the Springfield Road house. Therefore, the goal of the project was encouraging

⁹¹⁹ This emerged through informal interviews with some of the younger members of the Cornerstone Community.

⁹²⁰ The Cornerstone Community, “A Time for Reconciliation,” 4-5.

difficult conversations about truth and justice with participants from the people of the Shankill and Falls-Springfield area who would meet in a safe environment at the Springfield Road house. This two-year project gained funding, but was a failure for the Community, as they were unable to muster participation from members of their local community. The project was abandoned in 2009. This failure only confirmed the group's fears about the logistics of long term projects that rely on participation from outside the Springfield Road house. "A Time for Reconciliation" also caused anxiety within the Community, which is comprised largely of elderly adults, as it raised the debate concerning the viability of any large-scale projects in the future that required both the participation of the members of Cornerstone and those in the local area. Accordingly, since the "A Time for Reconciliation" project, Cornerstone has not begun any further projects out of the Springfield Road house.⁹²¹

The hesitation around starting new activities outside the Community further reflects the way that the social context has influenced the members of Cornerstone. There appears to be a desire among members to focus on the spirit of reconciliation within the Cornerstone Community, and one gets the impression that the group believes that they must first perfect this before trying to recreate it outside the walls of the Community. This seems a noble task, but why do those in Corrymeela feel so strongly about outreach activities and not those who are in Cornerstone? One reason is perhaps that Cornerstone is composed of people who have lived in a volatile area. What can be forgotten, especially when living with a group of people so focused on reconciliation, is that all of the interviewees from Cornerstone spoke from a social context that was unlike anyone I interviewed from Corrymeela. The members of Cornerstone grew up dealing with issues of hatred, violence, and death while living in a divided area. Cornerstone is composed, in one sense, of the exact people they would be trying to reach out to, and it appears

⁹²¹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

that they do not feel they have that right until they have wrestled with their own issues surrounding justice, truth, repentance and forgiveness.⁹²² This reluctance to do work outside of their own Community because of their continued quest for the Kingdom of God on earth could be viewed, on one hand, as a desire to maintain credibility at the local level, where examples of Protestants and Catholics living together and learning from one another is rare. On the other hand, this need for credibility is also linked to their desire to be legitimate within their own Community. This is reflected in the quote by Tom Hannon, who believes that the Cornerstone Community is still working to sort through its own issues with the “other.” These two factors have seemed continuously to move the Community back to working with issues of repentance and forgiveness between members of Cornerstone despite their momentary moves towards liberating tendencies.

While examining the way that the social context has influenced the theology of the two case studies in detail, it is beneficial at this stage to further examine the connections and divergences between the two different groups. The following section will place the two Communities side by side, each in their specific contexts, in order to see how existing in Northern Ireland has been a similar, and also a dissimilar, experience for both groups. While this research is based on assumptions, one of those being a simplistic view of the social context, the goal of this section is to show the nuances within each Community, and how it is difficult for any researcher to assume that one experience of living in Northern Ireland is similar to that of another.

⁹²² This can be seen as members wrestle with the ideas of the interface structures. For example, Sam Bright was torn on the issue, “I think the walls are a big separator, but without the walls there could have been more mayhem than there ever was. In one way they are a hindrance and in one way they are a help.” Sam Bright, Interview by Author, 5.

The Cornerstone Community and the Corrymeela Community: Historical and Theological Connections and Divergences

The Cornerstone and Corrymeela Communities have many connections, but a surprising amount of divergences as well, despite both being Christian, reconciliation Communities in the context of Northern Ireland. They have evolved throughout the years into two organisations with very different foci. On one hand, Corrymeela has focused on the importance of reconciliation in practical activities and programmes and has been less focused on the Christian spirituality element. On the other hand, Cornerstone has struggled with reconciliation programmes in the local area, but excelled at working on cross-community Christian worship and education from within their Community. Connections and divergences such as these are important when examining how the social context influences the theology of reconciliation, because it reflects how a small change within Northern Ireland, such as geography, has influenced an entire Community's view on the theology of reconciliation. Thus, the connections and divergences between Cornerstone and Corrymeela will be further explored through an examination of the Communities' respective geography, demographics, histories, and goals for the future.

Geography and Demographics

The geographical locations of Cornerstone and Corrymeela have served as an important influence on the theological beliefs of those working in both Communities. Cornerstone has always existed in the same position, on a peaceline in a highly contested area. Those who work in Cornerstone, for the most part, have grown up in this local area. Their focus has always been

on their work in this area, and they do very little in terms of work in the wider Northern Ireland. Corrymeela, conversely, has always focused on the work at the centre in Ballycastle, and only latterly has established project workers for the Belfast area. Corrymeela, has few interactions with the local Ballycastle area, and is instead focused on the idea of a neutral geographical area outside contentious areas. This has meant that Cornerstone has been forced throughout its existence to plan activities with the volatile Springfield area in mind, while Corrymeela has had a wider range of participants through established programmes. This difference is evident in the way Cornerstone emphasises hospitality and presence, a somewhat basic but non-contentious reaction to existing within a violent area. Corrymeela, on the other hand, has adopted a less-historical understanding of the nuances of reconciliation which goes beyond the issues of Catholics and Protestants.

The demographic of those working in Cornerstone and Corrymeela is, like the geographical setting, an important aspect to examine when attempting to understand the diverse understanding of reconciliation in both communities. Those who were interviewed at Corrymeela came from diverse backgrounds,⁹²³ but they all, in some way, reflected feelings of not feeling connected to others in their respective local areas. Reasons varying from mixed marriages to living as a minority in a divided neighbourhood reflected that those interviewed never had a sense of belonging with the areas in which they lived. It is not surprising, therefore, that these people who did not feel connected would be attracted to the open village mentality of Corrymeela, where the centre at Ballycastle was projected as being a neutral venue that belonged to everyone. It is also not surprising that some of those interviewed were embracing a post-Troubles Corrymeela which downplayed the elements of repentance and forgiveness and

⁹²³ It should be noted that Cornerstone has had a male Protestant and a male Catholic leader, though the majority of the members are Catholic. Corrymeela has only had male, Protestant leaders throughout its history, but has a more diverse demographic within its membership. Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

emphasised social justice, a theme that can be advocated across religious lines, an important position in an increasingly interfaith Northern Ireland.

Cornerstone, being very different in nature, has members who have grown up in the Shankill-Falls and Springfield area and continue to live, work and worship there to the present day. This geographical area of Belfast is their home, symbolised by members living in the Springfield Road house. It is apparent that throughout Cornerstone's existence they have tried to remain an integral part of their local community. This is evident from the Community historically being present at local funerals, supporting the after school programmes at Forthspring, and committing themselves to the continuing work of the Unity Pilgrims. This is in sharp contrast to Corrymeela, as Cornerstone, instead of widening their focus to include the changing demographics of Northern Ireland, have embraced the static, local community in the Shankill-Falls and Springfield Road area.

Whilst discussions on the geography and demographics are important in comparing Cornerstone and Corrymeela, it is in their respective histories where we begin to see the unique understanding of theology that both Communities have developed. Each Community has chosen to move their understanding of theology of reconciliation towards reconciling and-or liberating tendencies throughout their existence, and it is through an examination of their histories that we understand why.

History

Historically, Corrymeela, the first of the two communities, was established in a semi-peaceful time period where the Catholic Civil Rights Movement was challenging the status quo.

The founders of Corrymeela had hopes, reflected in their initial vision, of transforming the local church which in that context only urged on the tribalistic nature of the divided communities in Northern Ireland. This hope of transformation was shared by Cornerstone later on in the 1980's, and most of those in the founding Clonard Group would agree that the disillusionment with the local church was the main reason behind creating alternative meetings with members from both sides of the divide. Therefore, both Corrymeela and Cornerstone began with meetings of people who were looking for an alternative to the local church, though both desired to serve as an example and an inspiration for transformation of their local area.

The one instance where Corrymeela's theological development was similar to Cornerstone's overall view on theology was during the early stages of the Troubles. During this time period, Corrymeela moved from an understanding of reconciliation, which focused on planned activities and programmes at the Ballycastle centre, to one which emphasised the importance of representing a reconciling presence and hospitality for those who were being bused into the centre from the surrounding cities. For Corrymeela, the Troubles were a transitional period, theologically, from that of the socially progressive and relatively stable pre-Troubles era. Because of the instability of the country from the late 1960's and beyond there was a move from focusing on a balanced view of liberating and reconciling tendencies, which was the vision of Ray Davey when the Community was established, to a concentration on the importance of a Community that was working on reconciliation amongst its members and which could influence people in the Northern Ireland context. Focusing on issues related to justice and truth had the potential, at this stage in Corrymeela's history, to divide the local community further, and also to alienate those who were working within the Community. The need for local peace, or a focus on repentance and forgiveness, was the utmost need for

members of Corrymeela during the time period of the Troubles. It thus momentarily matched the understanding of the theology of reconciliation that Cornerstone would later adopt in the 1980s.

A shared focus on repentance and forgiveness within both of the Communities was tested by the Troubles, but unlike any other event the hunger strikes of the prisoners in the Maze prison⁹²⁴ was a dividing force in both Corrymeela and the burgeoning Cornerstone Community via the Clonard Group.⁹²⁵ At both Corrymeela and Cornerstone, interviewees discussed how these events challenged the various ways that the members of each Community interacted with one another. The hunger strikes were such a contentious issue, that some of the Catholics and the Protestants of each Community found it difficult to give up their respective opinions on the matter, even for the sake of reconciliation. It was a volatile period for both Communities, the Clonard group threatened to break apart because of this controversial protest and some members of Corrymeela demanded that the organisation be specified as a Protestant community.

For Corrymeela it was a wakeup call, to the fact that pursuing liberating tendencies is a difficult task when faced with such volatile times. John Morrow, leader of Corrymeela during this time, reflected: “We learned a lot about the limits of rational debate in a situation where our gut reactions were very different-depending on our cultural and religious background... We learnt that part of reconciliation involves living and accepting unresolved issues at times, as well as honesty and openness.”⁹²⁶ Though Corrymeela did not establish itself as a Protestant Community, it did begin to move towards a more inward Community-centred focus during the Troubles, where members worked together through issues of repentance and forgiveness, which

⁹²⁴ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 115.

⁹²⁵ See Chapter Four: The Corrymeela Community, 160 and Chapter Five: The Cornerstone Community, 232.

⁹²⁶ Morrow, *On the Road of Reconciliation*, 58-9.

looked a great deal like the Cornerstone Community's understanding of the theology of reconciliation.

For Cornerstone, the hunger strikes instilled the desire to focus on creating a strong bond within the Community that could survive even the most dividing of situations. It was, in some ways, a move that was spurred on by the loss of stability in Northern Ireland. The loss of this stability made it more difficult to execute cross-community ventures outside the Springfield Road house, as those in the local community were struggling to deal with increased violence. Likewise, the atmosphere of the Troubles, which further divided an already unstable local community in the area surrounding Cornerstone, caused even those who were the most devoted to the idea of reconciliation to feel themselves politically and socially pulled in one direction or the other by the events going on around them. One Cornerstone member remarked that the hunger strikes were like a mirror to those in the Clonard group, reflecting their continued struggle with personal biases. "It was as though our pasts had caught up with us," this member remarked. "We could not deny our history and all that came with it."⁹²⁷

The Troubles caused not only a loss of stability outside the Communities, but it also influenced the attitudes of the members within the Communities. It was, perhaps, an example in both Cornerstone and Corrymeela of the precarious nature of sustained reconciliation. Thus, as the Troubles raged on both Cornerstone and Corrymeela found themselves in a position where the need to stabilise themselves within their respective Communities became a priority.

In a post-Troubles world, from a theological standpoint, the ways in which Cornerstone and Corrymeela handle the ideas of spirituality, religion and theology differ significantly. Cornerstone, on the whole, models itself under a Trinitarian style, Community-centred understanding faith. There is a notion that, though different, Catholics and Protestants should

⁹²⁷ Informal conversation with a Cornerstone member, Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

worship, study and live together under one overarching understanding of God, and likewise try to find points of connection. These points of connection, in a sense, are what the theology of reconciliation looks like practically within Cornerstone, and it is what they use as a means of unity despite different backgrounds. One way of committing to this idea of unity is their continued commitment to weekly cross-community meetings that challenge the faith and understandings of both sides. The goal of these meetings is to encourage an idea of mutual understanding between those who are in the Community, and thus help encourage the reconciling example that Cornerstone wishes to project outward. Being different but unified is also reflected specifically in the outreach activities of the Unity Pilgrims. The Pilgrims worship together in their home, Catholic churches, and they then go to local Protestant churches to worship alongside their neighbours. This symbolises for the group the ability to maintain one's personal beliefs while simultaneously exploring the beliefs of others,

So whereas Cornerstone sees spirituality and theology as a means of finding a common connection within the local churches, Corrymeela has historically understood it as a dividing line. Because theology was such a contentious subject in Northern Ireland, they avoided it, unless it had direct practical application such as theological understandings of reconciliation and community. The desire to influence the churches became less an emphasis for Corrymeela, as is reflected in the notion being dropped from their vision statements. Corrymeela's focus on outward activities as a means of reflecting personal theological beliefs remains the main way that the Community understands the theology of reconciliation. To those who wish to further their Christian understanding of reconciliation they offered alternative places where spiritual development is the focus, most notably in the creation of Knocklayd.

Goals for the Future

Perhaps the biggest connection between Cornerstone and Corrymeela is their shared internal debates on the future of each respective Community. In both the Communities there was a pull between outward activities and Community-focused spirituality and how each pertained to the work of reconciliation. It appears in both Communities that, to avoid splits, the groups created ways in which members could express reconciliation both spiritually and practically. For Corrymeela, this meant creating areas for spiritual development, as they already had a programme-based centre at Ballycastle. For Cornerstone, this was seen by members going outside the house on the Springfield Road and venturing into programme-based reconciliation projects. This materialised in the creation of Forthspring.

On a practical level, the continued success of Corrymeela's programmes and the continued spiritual development of Cornerstone require an understanding of what is best suited for their respective contexts. For Cornerstone, that means focusing on what has always been the focus, the continued issues on the peacelines between Catholics and Protestants. The demographic of their area has remained fairly consistent, and accordingly their work in cross-community spirituality within the Springfield Road house has remained the primary focus through the years. The scope at Cornerstone has been narrow and specialised. The idea of programme-based approaches to a theology of reconciliation has been a dividing point in Cornerstone, and there is a continued debate between the younger generation members who desire an outward focus and the founding members who wish to maintain a Community-centred focus. The result of the desire for outward activities was the creation of Forthspring, which was connected to Cornerstone. Forthspring offered an answer to those demanding more outward

activities, and thus served much like Knocklyd at Corrymeela, by offering an alternative to a strictly practical or spiritual understanding of the theology of reconciliation.⁹²⁸

For Corrymeela, the future means deciding what direction the Christian Community will take in an increasingly multi-faith world. They too have the same issue with a younger generation that desires different programmes and activities than the older generation. Those who are younger are seeking to expand Corrymeela to a wider, multi-faith audience, where many members wish to maintain the Christian nature of the Community with a continued focus on the divide between Catholics and Protestants. For example, Emma Cowan explains:

I think that Corrymeela needs to move into a new phase. And the fact that I would like to become a member as well as a staff person is because I do really want to be part of, in the same way I want to be part of a new Belfast, I want to be part of taking Corrymeela to the next stage where it's not just about community relations. I have no particular interest in community...well not no interest in community relations, I do have an interest in it, but only in so far as we're bringing in an international dimension or looking towards a share future that is environmentally sustainable that does look at our consumption levels that does...that's all about transformation, that is looking very much for societal transformation, that's probably another understanding of my, how I understand reconciliation, it's a future focused endeavour and process thing.⁹²⁹

Being more in the public eye than Cornerstone, and simultaneously trying to maintain the idea of the open village means that Corrymeela has different expectations set upon it than the peaceline communities. Whereas Cornerstone is based on volunteering, with most of the founding members still active, Corrymeela is an older institution that sees itself as both a reconciliation community and a non-profit organisation. This means, on a practical level, that

⁹²⁸ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁹²⁹ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 13. Additionally, David Stevens stated, "So there's a whole series of changes that have come together here and a changing Northern Ireland where the issues, and of course people have been formed by experiences in the 70s and 80s and they want some of those things to continue which is absolutely right, but they may not be able to continue in the ways they were. And that is very difficult and painful for people to here and to act on." David Stevens, Interview by Author, 56.

Corrymeela has not maintained strictly Christian staff or volunteers. On a theological level, it seems that Corrymeela must make a choice concerning its future as a Christian centre. What is certain is that both Communities are being forced, because of the continued peace process, to re-visit what it means to maintain the vision of their founders in a post-conflict society.

Conclusion

The government and our people wanted peace! This was delivered, so don't disrupt our present and future by digging into the past.⁹³⁰

The Theology of Reconciliation

Liberal theology, which was explained in the introduction as being the framework behind the theological understandings in this study, makes the underlying assumption that “context affects content.”⁹³¹ In this view, the most important way of understanding theology is through the “present human experience, with a particular focus on human culture, secular or religious.”⁹³² This study of theology has, in recent times, been more closely associated with understanding notions of contextualised theology such as Liberation, Feminist and Black Theology. The key element for theologians who study these types of theologies is that through analysing social contexts, one might better understand the new theological interpretations of previously established doctrine.⁹³³

⁹³⁰ Brian Rowan reporting on graffiti in Belfast, “Eames-Bradley: Saville Report ‘has revived the will to deal with the past,’ *Belfast Telegraph* <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local/national/eamesbradley-saville-report-lsquoahas-revived-the-will-to-deal-with-the-past-14855160.html> [accessed on 16 August 2010].

⁹³¹ Stephen B. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 58.

⁹³² Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 57.

⁹³³ Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 9.

The theology of reconciliation seemingly should be categorised under this heading. For while its vertical element was developed thoroughly by European thinkers, its horizontal understanding was nurtured in the political arenas, particularly in places of turmoil such as Northern Ireland. David Stevens noted that Ray Davey first brought the idea of a theology of reconciliation into the vernacular through the Corrymeela Community in the 1960s where it was generally seen by the local community as being a positive step: “When Ray Davey started to use the discourse of reconciliation it was utterly marginal, and now it’s completely mainstream.”⁹³⁴ Reconciliation was, in a sense, counter-culture as it sought to bring together the two sides of the divide because, as David Stevens stated: “It [Corrymeela] was so different from the prevailing reality.”⁹³⁵ Stevens was drawn to the work of Corrymeela, for he felt, “dissatisfaction with the predominant religious and political reality in Northern Ireland.”⁹³⁶ So while most contextualised theology reflects a view shared widely amongst a group of people, influenced by their social context, the theology of reconciliation began as being advocated by a minority who believed this understanding of theology to be important to their local area.

Another characteristic of contextualised theology is that it is oftentimes focuses on liberation from an oppressive power figure, such as in the cases of Liberation Theology and Black Theology. Those adhering to a theology of reconciliation, while advocating both liberating and reconciling tendencies, found themselves attempting to work with the local and national level during the Troubles in order to establish a peaceful and liberated society in Northern Ireland. The consequence of this interaction was that the government began to associate itself with the work of reconciliation, despite the division in Stormont, and thus what

⁹³⁴ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 54.

⁹³⁵ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 53.

⁹³⁶ David Stevens, Interview by Author, 53.

had once began a theology that was contextualised for the people was seen at the local level as being a representation of the prevailing authority.

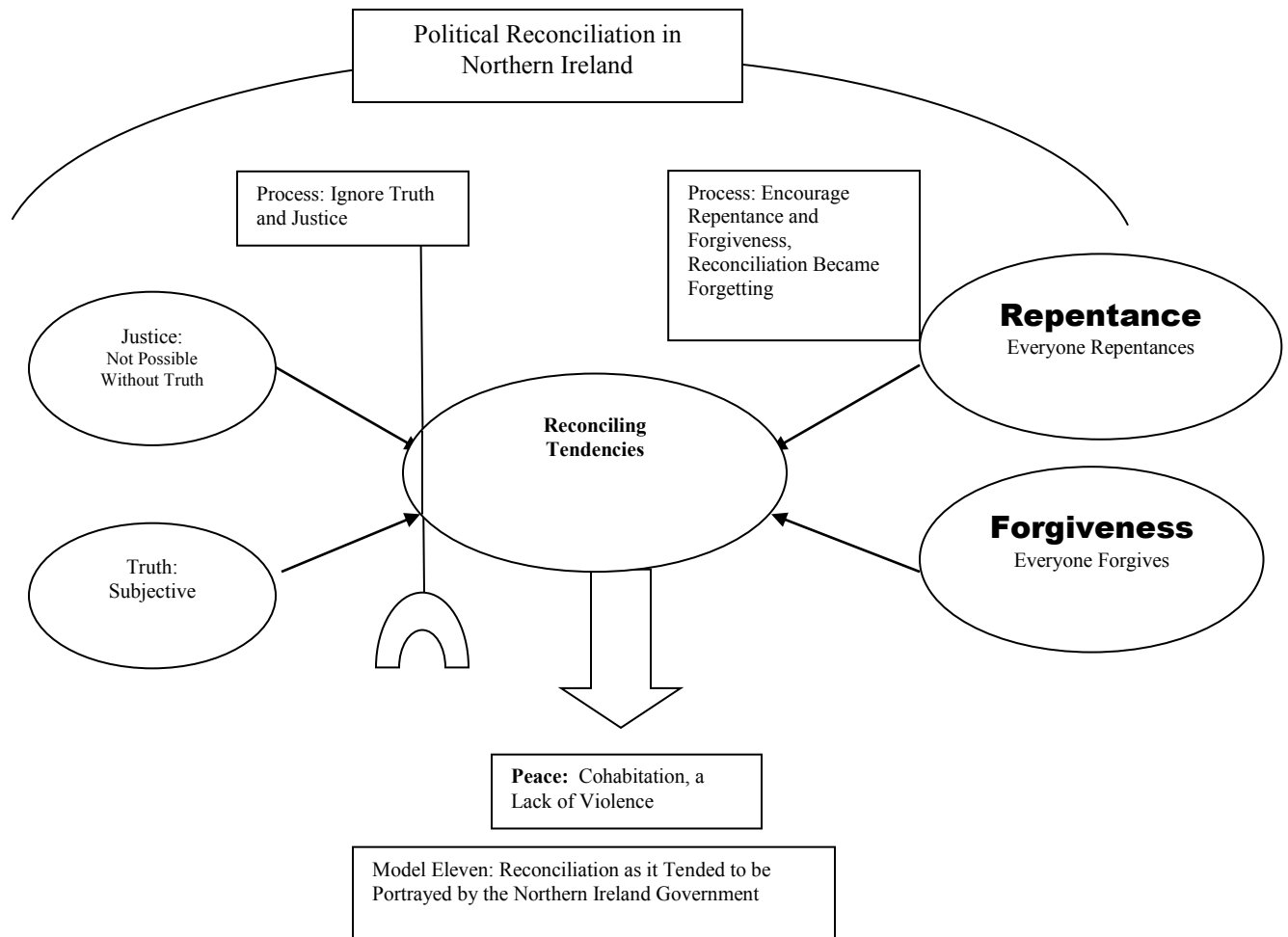
The Notion of Reconciliation at the National Level in Northern Ireland

In the time of the Troubles, and later a post-Troubles reality, reconciliation began to be used by politicians who were, it appeared, unable to come to grips with their own divided nature. This may have been, as Lederach argued when describing the national level of a social context, because the politicians believed that the use of reconciliation, specifically through the use of theological language, would inspire peaceful cohabitation despite the divided government.⁹³⁷ Or, as Northern Ireland writer Norman Porter suggests, reconciliation served as a way of enriching a country suffering from “jaded politics”⁹³⁸ through the combination of religious and political language.

The question is, what does this combined version of the political and theological understanding of reconciliation look like? If we continue to reference the model used in Chapter Two we will see the implications:

⁹³⁷ See Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 131.

⁹³⁸ Norman Porter, *The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003), 23.



The national level of government in Northern Ireland, during the peace process, seemed convinced the only way to maintain any sort of order was to promote forgiveness and repentance without attention to justice and truth. This unsurprisingly caused discontent among those at the local level who were living the day-to-day perils of life in Northern Ireland.⁹³⁹ The government's use of reconciliation in the post-peace process caused members at the local level to begin to distrust the word,⁹⁴⁰ for it was regarded as a means by which the government was trying to push both sides of the divide together without further conflict.⁹⁴¹

⁹³⁹ Porter, *The Elusive Quest*, 1-12.

⁹⁴⁰ This can be likened to the South African *Kairos* Theologian's distrust of "cheap reconciliation." See Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation, 34.

⁹⁴¹ See Patrick Roche quote, Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 137.

The use of the term reconciliation by the government indicated that the pendulum swung towards extreme reconciling tendencies, so extreme that forgiveness and repentance were assumed to the point of forgetfulness, enforced through interface separation, and justice and truth were essentially ignored at the national level.⁹⁴²

This version of political reconciliation, which became so popular amongst politicians during the start of the peace process, differed significantly from the type of theological reconciliation that those who worked Cornerstone and Corrymeela adhered to. Political reconciliation emphasised stability at all costs. The natural progression of this was that in order to maintain stability with the Northern Ireland context in mind there was a need to ignore truth and justice and emphasise repentance and forgiveness.

There was, however, very little evidence of repentance and forgiveness in the Northern Ireland government from the peace process onwards, and thus the public did not take seriously these concepts that were being advocated. This is best explained by Norman Porter who devotes much of his book, *The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*,⁹⁴³ to the idea that the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement has created a situation where reconciliation within the Northern Ireland government is nearly impossible. Porter writes that because of the emphasis on cohabitation and sharing within the government of Northern Ireland, there is little in the way of finding common ground between political parties. This causes a standstill in Stormont, as neither side will give way to the other side's political agendas. Porter explains: "The current

⁹⁴² According to L. Philip Barnes, there is a negative attitude at the local level towards the national level in Northern Ireland which is unusual for post-conflict societies, "This (Northern Ireland) contrasts with the positive attitudes towards the state in many other post-conflict situations, where agreements introduced democratic procedures and institutions that gave a popular legitimacy and authority to the nation state, as, for example, in South Africa." Barnes, "Reconciling Enemies," 193.

⁹⁴³ Norman Porter, *The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003).

situation in the North has, as we should expect, all the ingredients of a power struggle between two competing politics of belonging, which much of Nationalism thinks it is destined to win, but which Unionists are determined never to quit.”⁹⁴⁴ So whilst the government projected their version of reconciliation at the national level, reconciliation was simultaneously being defined at the local level.

The Notion of Reconciliation at the Local Level in Northern Ireland

Reconciliation, in the skewed political sense of the word, became the accepted version of reconciliation at the local level, and thus appeared to suck the theology of reconciliation under its wing. This caused those who the reconciliation communities were hoping to participate with in the local community to be suspicious of places like Corrymeela and Cornerstone. The reconciliation communities were seen as being associated with the government, as advocating peace without justice and truth, and as representing a third “other.”⁹⁴⁵ This occurred, despite the reconciliation communities continued understanding of the theology of reconciliation as being different than what was being talked about within politics in Northern Ireland. This is explained in an interview with Tom Hannon as he described recently watching a television show that featured various politicians from Northern Ireland, “But they [the politicians] kept talking about the political process and the peace process, the political process, the peace process, and I was thinking to myself, ‘They think that the political process and the peace process are one and the same thing.’”⁹⁴⁶ Hannon went on to say that he

⁹⁴⁴ Porter, *The Elusive Quest*, 195.

⁹⁴⁵ Porter, *The Elusive Quest*, 23.

⁹⁴⁶ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 38.

strongly disagreed with this belief, and explained that the actual peace process was occurring on a local level, not a national level, despite the claims by politicians.⁹⁴⁷

What was the difference between this notion of political reconciliation and the theology of reconciliation as practiced by the reconciliation communities? Cornerstone, Corrymeela and the government would claim they were all influenced by the social context, and likewise all would say that those within their respective groups desire stability in Northern Ireland. The Cornerstone Community, throughout its existence, has focused on reconciling tendencies, but instead of forcing this idea at the local level, they have attempted to create an example of the possibilities of Northern Ireland by living together. Corrymeela, moved from reconciling to liberating tendencies throughout their history, based upon the ways that they believed they could best serve their local community. Therefore, during the initial creation they held a vision with a balanced view on liberating and reconciling tendencies, but moved to a more Cornerstone-like belief during the Troubles. Finally, upon entering the peace process and beyond they looked for ways in which to address issues of truth and justice and strived again to balance their reconciling and liberating tendencies. So where the politicians used reconciliation to create a polarised political atmosphere in Stormont where the two sides within government would continue to uphold their divided positions, be equal in representation and meanwhile attempt to maintain stability at a local level, Corrymeela and Cornerstone understood reconciliation as a way to find connections, tell stories, advocate for social justice and attempt to live as both a liberated and peaceful community.

In a post-Troubles world, it has not taken long for places like Cornerstone and Corrymeela to realise that reconciliation had become a dirty word politically, and that their theological beliefs that centred on this concept are, inevitably, influencing their work with the

⁹⁴⁷ Tom Hannon, Interview by Author, 38.

local community. Corrymeela has been especially sensitive to this, and in a post-Troubles situation began to focus less on Catholic and Protestant programmes and more on gaining international recognition through projects that centre on ideas of justice. Those working in the Corrymeela Community emphasised this separation from the national understanding of reconciliation in their interviews. For example, Corrymeela worker Emma Cowan stated in her interview that she hoped to “redefine, in a way, how people perceive Corrymeela.”⁹⁴⁸

While those working in reconciliation communities are attempting to be sensitive to the negative connotation associated with reconciliation, they are likewise dealing with the issues of stability-based inclinations of the local level in Northern Ireland, or the understanding at the local level that being separated with no violence is reconciliation. This is a result, some have speculated, of the polarising effects of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement, whereby a move towards balance in the Executive has created a political stalemate.⁹⁴⁹ This was not the intention of the Agreement, but as the years passed and violence continued, those who were politically moderate began to lose interest in voting or move to one of the stratified political parties.⁹⁵⁰ This polarisation has trickled down to the local level, where in 2005, 67.3% of Catholics and 73% of Protestants lived in segregated neighbourhoods.⁹⁵¹

Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, in their book *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*⁹⁵² discuss this idea of “benign apartheid,”⁹⁵³ which can be defined as, “a peace that falls short of reconciliation.”⁹⁵⁴ Liechty and Clegg, who for six years researched sectarianism in Northern Ireland, found a consistent trend with those whom they studied. This trend involved the desire

⁹⁴⁸ Emma Cowan, Interview by Author, 12.

⁹⁴⁹ See Chapter 3: A History of Northern Ireland, 131.

⁹⁵⁰ Shirlow and Coulter, “Enduring Problems,” 210.

⁹⁵¹ Shirlow and Coulter, “Enduring Problems,” 212.

⁹⁵² Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001).

⁹⁵³ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 195.

⁹⁵⁴ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 195.

for a social context devoid of violence, even at the sake of reconciliation. Liechty and Clegg give various reasons why this type of benign apartheid exists in Northern Ireland, which they summarise in the following:

Derived from conflict-weariness in many cases and likely to be presented as hard-headed, unblinking political realism, this is the conviction that not more than peaceful coexistence is possible in Northern Ireland and therefore the pursuit of something more is a waste of time and possibly counter-productive.⁹⁵⁵

The main concern of those who Liechty and Clegg interacted with in their study was the maintenance of a level of stability where violence did not occur. One way that those who participated in Liechty and Clegg's research believed that stability would remain in place was through the continued separation of the two divided groups. This was not a radical idea amongst the participants, seeing as many of these people had grown up separated and thus saw no reason why this must change.⁹⁵⁶ In one instance Liechty and Clegg interviewed a Methodist preacher who stated that his congregation was not filled with bigoted people, they were simply happy with their peaceful life in their own local community, "and their vision extended no further."⁹⁵⁷

This lack of vision is problematic on different levels. Perhaps the most important is that benign apartheid, according to Liechty and Clegg, reflects a state of peace that is not stable: "The allure of benign apartheid is false and deceiving."⁹⁵⁸ Benign apartheid does not create a stable society, but a society that is one incident away from violence. This was seen in my own field work, as the deaths at the Massereene Barracks and the death of police officer Stephen Carroll in March of 2009 caused ongoing riots and bomb threats in the Springfield area of

⁹⁵⁵ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 196.

⁹⁵⁶ This is one of three reasons that Liechty and Clegg give as to why benign apartheid is accepted in Northern Ireland. Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 195-6.

⁹⁵⁷ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 196.

⁹⁵⁸ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 204.

Belfast. Through this period, there was continuous pleading from the government to avoid retaliation. Within Cornerstone there was a sense of nervousness, based on the unstable nature of benign apartheid, that at any time violence could erupt and spiral out of control.⁹⁵⁹ This is clearly not a peace that is sustainable, but it is a peace that is acceptable to those on the local level. This acceptance is a continuing issue for those who are members of reconciliation communities as they work tirelessly to create a vision of both the liberating and reconciling tendencies within reconciliation that will be embraced at the local level.

A desire for benign apartheid is reflected even by those who choose to participate in programmes sponsored by the Communities. At Corrymeela, it is commonly seen in a lack of conversations amongst participants concerning the division in Northern Ireland. Ronnie Millar names this problem as “politeness,”⁹⁶⁰ and he admits that it is the most difficult aspect of a theology of reconciliation in practice. Those who do happen to participate in the activities at Corrymeela associate reconciliation with benign apartheid, and thus feel as though being polite is the best way to express themselves in cross-community settings. This politeness, in the world of the Communities, means that any meaningful work that involves truth, justice, forgiveness and repentance is shockingly difficult. According to Porter, many of those in Northern Ireland have picked up on the themes of the government and are thus desperate for stability even at the cost of reconciliation: “One explanation why political reconciliation is in scarcer supply than it should be is because peace without reconciliation is the implicit position of more people in Northern Ireland than many of us care to admit...it is a position that may derive from a number of sources, including those of indifference, fear and bitterness.”⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁹ Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

⁹⁶⁰ Ronnie Millar, Interview by Author, 29.

⁹⁶¹ Porter, *The Elusive Quest*, 39.

This fear of instability at the local level encourages benign apartheid and is reflected upon by David Stevens in recent Corrymeela publications when he raised the question: “Can peace survive the truth?”⁹⁶² Stevens adds that this question is a result of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement: “The compromise which brought a compromised society revolves around significant actors not taking responsibility for their actions-the fiction of innocence. The cost of a settlement is living in a semi-permanent grey zone.”⁹⁶³ Therefore, if there is to be a move towards a pursuit of truth and justice (liberating tendencies) in this context there must be a willingness to recognise that this might entail moving the focus away from maintaining the stability of society. The move towards liberating tendencies at the risk of stability has been attempted sporadically in Northern Ireland by way of tribunals and reports concerning violent events during the Troubles. The findings of these reports have not been accepted at the local level,⁹⁶⁴ and have oftentimes resulted in further violence. It is not surprising, therefore, that these attempts towards the pursuit of an ultimate historical truth and a suitable means of reparation happen infrequently in this context.

Conversely, a focus on repenting and forgiving for the sake of peace, which was the case for both Communities during the Troubles, remains a contentious issue among scholars and those working in the local communities in Northern Ireland. This was best seen in the studies by Michael Hall discussed in Chapter Three.⁹⁶⁵ The liberating understanding of the theology of reconciliation has, in the context of Corrymeela, only been reflected when the local society and

⁹⁶² Stevens, “The Claims of Truth and Peace,” 2.

⁹⁶³ David Stevens, “The Fiction of Innocence,” (20 January 2010) <http://www.corrymeela.org/article/fiction.aspx> [accessed 1 February 2010].

⁹⁶⁴ For example, see discussions concerning the Eames-Bradley report, Unknown, “NI Troubles Plan Gets Frosty Response” BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk/northern-ireland-10677957> [accessed on 16 August 2010]. And also the more recent negative reaction to the Saville Report, Henry Patterson, “For many the Bloody Sunday Saville Report has fallen short,” *Belfast Telegraph* (16 June 2010), <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/henry-patterson-for-many-the-bloody-sunday-saville-report-has-fallen-short-14843874.html> [accessed 18 March 2011].

⁹⁶⁵ See Michael Hall’s studies, Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 138.

their own Community are stable. It appears that only once stability is created, those who work in reconciliation begin to approach ideas connected with the concepts of justice and peace. If, and perhaps when, these endeavours create an unstable context with their sometimes controversial nature, then there is a return to reconciling tendencies, a move based on the desire to reduce anything that will create violence. This retreat, historically, has placed repentance and forgiveness in a “soft” or easy category and that of justice and truth as the unreachable pursuits.

This is, from my perspective, a harsh way to interpret the reactions of the two reconciliation Communities. In this divided area, the ideas of truth and justice are issues in Northern Ireland that can cause strife amongst people, even those working within cross-community organisations. As Stevens stated, the grey zone that reflect the current social context of Northern Ireland, means that to pursue historical truth or retributive justice someone must be in the wrong. This has caused a move away from liberating tendencies towards reconciling tendencies when Northern Ireland has dipped into violent interludes throughout its history. For Corrymeela this move towards reconciling tendencies was in the times of the Troubles. For those living in the Cornerstone Community, where violence has always been a constant threat and internal splits a legitimate concern, there is a continued emphasis on reconciling tendencies. So while the government pursued reconciliation for political gain, the reconciliation communities adjusted their beliefs as they continued to figure out how to best help the people of Northern Ireland and maintain their respective membership.

The Future of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

Despite this reliance at the local level on benign apartheid and the government's skewed interpretation of the reconciliation, there is the idea that this could be a new season for those who advocate a theology of reconciliation. Amidst current worries by those in the field of reconciliation studies, because of a lack of reconciliation-language in political documents associated with the continued peace process in Northern Ireland, Cornerstone and Corrymeela continue to embrace the theological concepts of reconciliation within their Communities. Corrymeela with its recent moves towards liberating tendencies has worked to move the sliding scale to a more balanced view of reconciliation, to counter the local level's association of reconciliation with forgetfulness. Cornerstone has chosen to publicly disassociate itself with the government's use of reconciliation, and to continue to try and exist as an example of what true reconciliation might be like.

Now, Cornerstone and Corrymeela have a chance to reclaim their counter-cultural status, as a result of their theology being influenced by the social context. For while they continue to pursue a vision of a reconciled Northern Ireland, the government has backed away from the use of the word, which could potentially free it from negative associations.⁹⁶⁶ This disassociation by the government signals an important opportunity for the reconciliation Communities. This time instead of trying to introduce reconciliation into a divided society, as was the vision of Ray Davey in the 1960s, Corrymeela and Cornerstone have begun a process of reclaiming the concept and trying to define their theology of reconciliation through the actions of their respective Communities.

⁹⁶⁶ See the analysis of this by Gladys Ganiel in Chapter Three: A History of Northern Ireland, 133.

Corrymeela has moved towards a long-awaited emphasis on truth and justice, most obviously in their addition of Emma Cowan, the Faith and Life project worker. Her programme, Activism at the Kitchen Table looks to advocate for culturally, religiously, financially, and sexually oppressed members of the Belfast community. Cowan states: “The people involved are a loose network of women and men with a common interest in engaging with contemporary social and ethical issues at the level of education, conversation, debate which informs local action.”⁹⁶⁷ This, along with the continued work at the Ballycastle centre, which has increasingly begun to address issues ranging from cross-community and interfaith endeavours to gay and lesbian rights raises Corrymeela to a status of cutting edge liberating tendencies.

Cornerstone, as well, has held firm to its continued struggle to create a vision of reconciliation that incorporates all of the concepts of truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness. With the continued view by the local level that reconciliation is a bad word because of its extreme focus on reconciling tendencies, Cornerstone is offering a version of the theology of reconciliation that has been successful on a small scale and may lead to inspiration for a possible future that has not yet been seen in the life of those living in their local community. So while Corrymeela is working to balance their liberating and reconciling tendencies in their context, Cornerstone is working on perfecting their reconciling tendencies with the hope that they might inspire those around them.

By defining reconciliation according to their theological beliefs, and holding true to their continued commitments to the local community, both Communities are working to accomplish the difficult “bottom up”⁹⁶⁸ influence advocated by Lederach in the previous chapter. Lederach argues that this style of reconciliation is most evident in countries where the

⁹⁶⁷ Emma Cowan, “Faith and Life.” The Official Corrymeela Website, <http://www.corrymeela.org-sitepage-faithandlife.aspx> [accessed 18 March 2001].

⁹⁶⁸ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 52.

government has been unable to come to agreed-upon decisions, and thus the local community has begun a village-like system, organising themselves locally as opposed to expecting this from the national level: “From personal experience I can attest to the fact that the process of advancing political negotiations at polished tables in elite hotels, while very difficult and complex in its own right, is both a more formal and more superficial process than the experience of reconciliation in which former enemies are brought together at a village level.”⁹⁶⁹ This type of “bottom-up” approach fits directly into the work that both Cornerstone and Corrymeela are attempting according to Maria Power:

As communities they [reconciliation communities] have been constantly aware of the need to change, reacting to events while retaining their initial vision of practical Christian reconciliation. Herein lies the key to their success: they listened to the Protestant and Catholic communities themselves, rather than imposing the kind of “top-down approach” that characterises much of the community relations work currently being carried out in the Province.⁹⁷⁰

So while the national level was an influence on both Corrymeela and Cornerstone, they held their focus on the local level, which allowed them to adapt to the changing needs of Northern Ireland and has thus given them credibility amongst those at the local level. This is a credibility that has, unfortunately, not been the case for political reconciliation. As politicians continue to move themselves away from reconciliation-based language, it will hopefully further illustrate the local level-centred commitment of the Communities.

Cornerstone and Corrymeela, have to their credit, served the people of Northern Ireland through their willingness to allow their theological tendencies to move based on the needs of their Community members and those participants at the local level. It is through this movement

⁹⁶⁹ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 54-5.

⁹⁷⁰ Maria Power, “Getting to Know the ‘Other,’” in *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed. Marianne Elliott (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 204.

they have continuously worked to be both legitimate in their pursuits of reconciliation and respected by those who live in Northern Ireland. This has been accomplished contextually, with Corrymeela adjusting their focus of liberating and reconciling tendencies throughout their long history in order pull reconciliation out of a “soft” category and through Cornerstone’s desire to serve as an example of a reconciled community amidst existing in one of the most violent areas in Northern Ireland. In a discussion on peaceline communities such as Cornerstone, Power adds,

The methods and ideas of the peaceline ecumenical communities, especially their use of prayer as a means of initially gaining the trust of local communities, have the potential to be one of the most potent forces available to resolve conflict and build peace, especially in a region where the majority of the population “belong” to a religion.⁹⁷¹

Lederach claims that the bottom up approach is a difficult way of going about sustainable reconciliation, but in a country where the government has repeatedly failed to come together for the sake of its people, it may be that this type of local leadership which endorses a new way of understanding and embracing reconciliation that is influenced not by the national but by the local. This could prove to be both beneficial to the understanding of the theology of reconciliation and influential in its ability to bring Catholic and Protestants in Northern Ireland together.

⁹⁷¹ Power, “Getting to Know the ‘Other,’” 204.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Summary of Previous Chapters

The previous chapters represented the key aspects of my research question that needed to be explored prior to a discussion on the social context's influence on a theology of reconciliation. The first chapter introduced the research question and gave the reader an insight into my methodology. Chapter Two explored the development of the theology of reconciliation. I ended this chapter with an introduction to a new model of the theology of reconciliation that took into account the social context. The next chapter, Chapter Three, gave a brief history of the greater social context of this study, Northern Ireland. Chapters Four and Five continued this examination by offering a historical analysis of the two case studies within this research, the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Community. Chapter Six took the elements that had been explored through Chapters One through Five and tied them together in a discussion whereby the research question might be further explored. This concluding chapter will offer a brief summary of the major implications of my research and also potential for further study.

Implications of Research

A New Model of the Theology of Reconciliation

By using work by previous scholars, most notably John Paul Lederach and Joseph Liechty, I created a distinct model that would reflect the movement in theological belief that was based on the influence of the social context. This model uniquely grouped the ideas of repentance-forgiveness and truth-justice into reconciling and liberating tendencies respectively. Through my field research, these two groupings were used as a means of showing how the theological beliefs of both Communities had shifted throughout the years based on the social context. The shifts were expressed through the processes by which the two Communities, Corrymeela and Cornerstone, went about enacting their theology of reconciliation. It also defined the major concepts within the theology of reconciliation, justice, truth, repentance and forgiveness, according to both the interviews and the publications of each Community throughout their history. This offered a view into the ways that the theological beliefs had changed throughout the history of the two Communities in a way that had never been documented for either Community.

This model, as opposed to defining nuanced words subjectively, hoped to reflect the ways that those who were actively pursuing reconciliation understood the complicated concepts associated with reconciliation. By using a model that was dynamic, there was the ability to witness how the social context influenced the theology of reconciliation in both Communities, and thus changed the ways that people understood justice, truth, repentance and forgiveness. Also, by exploring not only the current social context of each Community, but also the

historical social context (both nationally and locally), there was the opportunity to see the ways that the Communities had evolved throughout the years of the Troubles to today and how theological beliefs and practices had been adjusted accordingly. So, not only does it show the way that the social context influences Corrymeela and Cornerstone today, but it offered a view into the way that the historical social context, most evident in the political situation of the Troubles, developed the theology of reconciliation within both Communities.

The Impact of the Social Context on the Theology of Reconciliation

The discussion in Chapter Six tied in all the different strands of the research project into one final analysis. This chapter began with a section on the summary of the findings of the influence of the social context on Corrymeela. This summary went through the history of Corrymeela and showed, using the theology of reconciliation model provided in Chapter Two, the movement between reconciling and liberating tendencies.

The first model showed Corrymeela in the pre-Troubles era, where by way of the initial vision of Ray Davey, it portrayed the Community as emphasising both liberating and reconciling tendencies through their work in the social justice realm and their focus on creating a reconciling presence within Corrymeela. This balanced emphasis changed throughout the years of the Troubles, as the Community began to focus less on liberating tendencies, which seemed to cause contention amongst those in the local community, and instead began to lean more towards reconciling tendencies. This move was a result of the needs of those who were coming to the Ballycastle centre away from areas of violence, whereby Corrymeela wanted to exude a sense of hospitality and peace.

The final model in the section on Corrymeela showed the move from an emphasis on reconciling tendencies to that of liberating tendencies from the time period of the Troubles to the Corrymeela of today. The Community has moved, especially in recent years, towards establishing themselves in the local Belfast community as a group dedicated to local activism. Their programmes at Ballycastle, as well, reflect a move towards liberating tendencies for a continuously diversified Northern Ireland. This move towards liberating tendencies and the increasing interfaith nature of the Community has meant that there has also been a decrease in the emphasis on reconciling tendencies which are commonly associated as Christian concepts.

Cornerstone, which was created during the Troubles, has a different relationship to the social context than Corrymeela. Where Corrymeela reacted to the social context from a fairly stable geographic area, Cornerstone has forever existed on one of the peaceline areas of Belfast. Their social context, therefore, did not move from unstable to stable in post-Troubles reality, but has remained fairly consistently unstable throughout their existence. This lack of stability has created a theological understanding of reconciliation with a focus on reconciling tendencies, with sporadic moves towards liberating tendencies.

A focus on reconciling tendencies has created an in-depth view of reconciliation amongst the members of Cornerstone. Their focus, as a Community, has been on creating a Kingdom of God amongst themselves, mirroring the diverse yet connected imagery of the Trinity. Their feelings that this Kingdom has not yet been perfected, and because of continuing strife over the future of Cornerstone, means that their attempts at activities that would be categorised under liberating tendencies have been few.

It must be made clear that this research has used the social context in both a current and historical scenario. This was done in order to show how the historic events that occurred in

Northern Ireland have influenced how the theology of reconciliation is expressed in a modern day social context. The history chapter describes events that were running alongside the creation and development of both of the Communities, and thus serves a backdrop to the ways that those within Cornerstone and Corrymeela were expressing their theological beliefs. So while giving an in depth description of the current social contexts of each Community, there is very little that could be gained if not placed in the larger picture of the historical social context. This offered the reader not just an understanding of the theology of reconciliation in each Community, but also described the developments through the years of the theology. These developments often coincided with national events at the time, and so with the history chapter in this research there is a way to cross-reference both the individual developments of the Communities as well as the larger historical events that were occurring at the time and likewise being referenced by publications and interviewees during my field research. Finally, it is difficult to make suggestions or predictions of the future of the Communities or Northern Ireland in general, without having some idea of the historical context. We can use history, both past mistakes and accomplishments, to aid us in analysing what the future holds as well as ways to maintain faithful practice in a changing social context. This leads us into a discussion about what the future holds for both Communities.

Possible New Roles for Reconciliation Communities

Corrymeela and Cornerstone have throughout the years, theologically, been pulled between the idea of maintaining the victim mentality within the precarious stability of benign apartheid and likewise implementing a theology of reconciliation that has elements of truth and

justice. This hesitance towards the instability of liberating tendencies is reflected in Hall's study on local views on reconciliation. Hall's answer to bringing legitimacy back to reconciliation in the Northern Ireland context is by implementing a commitment to a "preparedness to question."⁹⁷² The difficulty in this mentality, the preparedness to question, is the volatile nature of Northern Ireland. One participant in Hall's discussion on the peace process referred to it as the "appeasement process,"⁹⁷³ where everyone involved felt some sort of justification for their cause and their actions. A focus on truth and justice, which has been noticeably absent from discussions on reconciliation in Northern Ireland would, in theory, change the present negative views at the local level concerning reconciliation. It would require a significant change in the status quo, however, as David Stevens points out, "Justice and truth are forms of acknowledgement and accountability."⁹⁷⁴

If justice and truth are forms of acknowledgement and accountability, and historically these concepts have not created a stable Northern Ireland, it might mean that Cornerstone and Corrymeela will have to move, at least for some period of time, even farther in the precarious realm of liberating tendencies for reconciliation to once again become relevant within the context. While this suggestion might seem dangerous for a society that lives so predominately on the edge of violence, it is not a move that will necessarily be different from what Northern Ireland lives on a day-to-day basis. Those who are from Northern Ireland know, because of the precarious nature of benign apartheid, that any violence in the area could potentially lead to wide scale disruption.⁹⁷⁵ Therefore, any initial move towards acknowledgement and

⁹⁷² Michael Hall, "The Death of the Peace Process?" *Island Pamphlets* 17 (March 1997): 24.

⁹⁷³ Hall, "The Death of the Peace Process?" 7.

⁹⁷⁴ Stevens, *The Land of Unlikeness*, 30.

⁹⁷⁵ In an informal discussion with friends who grew up in Northern Ireland I discussed an incident whereby I was stuck in traffic for hours because of bomb scares. The answer by the three friends were: "What do you expect?," "Ah, home sweet home," and "Oh, the joys of Northern Ireland." Leah Robinson, Field Notes.

accountability (liberating tendencies) for the sake of a long term goal of freedom by those who work and live at the local area is seemingly a risk worth taking, for as Desmond Tutu states: “True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse.”⁹⁷⁶ Also, if the Communities were able to pursue liberating tendencies, and use their influence at the local level to maintain their reconciling tendencies, it might inspire the general public to stop clinging to benign apartheid for the sake of stability.

Accordingly, it is hard to know the future of the theology of reconciliation if reclaimed and re-evaluated to include a balanced view of reconciling *and* liberating tendencies by those who are at the local level. It is not something that has been attempted in a post-Troubles world, and it could prove to be powerful especially if those who work in reconciliation communities were able to bring the local churches into a shared vision alongside both secular and religious community workers. With this in mind, I again reference the work of John Paul Lederach who argues for the power of ground level leadership.⁹⁷⁷ Those who are at the local level and who participate actively in the local community have the advantage of trust that is not present at the national level. Therefore, if any group is capable of maintaining both peace and freedom simultaneously in Northern Ireland, it would be the likes of those who live, work, and worship in amongst those they are looking to reconcile. In perhaps one of the most recent articles on the theology of reconciliation and Northern Ireland, L. Philip Barnes shares this notion:

⁹⁷⁶ Archbishop Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 270.

⁹⁷⁷ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 52.

There may be a case, however, within the context of Christian witness to justice and peace in a society, for the churches collectively to describe and to reflect upon the period of the Troubles on the basis of distinctively Christian beliefs and moral commitments. Such an account would be markedly different in form and substance from that pursued by the nation state, with its ultimate commitment to “nation building.”⁹⁷⁸

Another inherent danger in this pursuit of liberating tendencies is the understanding that those within the Communities themselves are oftentimes at odds about their own respective futures.

Whilst both Corrymeela and Cornerstone portrayed a unified view in interviews and publications, my fieldwork suggested that any moves toward significant change within the Communities could cause major disruption. So whether it is more outreach activities in the Shankill-Falls or a move towards an interfaith Corrymeela, there will need to be strong leadership within the Communities to keep members on board with any changes that might occur. Leaders with strong visions in the past have kept the Communities tightly together, but as Corrymeela grows in size and Cornerstone continues to move towards group-based leadership, this might be more difficult in the future.

Further Study

The Social Context and the Theology of Reconciliation

One discovery during my research into how the social context influences a theology of reconciliation in the Northern Ireland context is how specified a theological belief can be.

Those who worked under the arch of a theology of reconciliation in Corrymeela and Cornerstone had created a specific way of understanding reconciliation that coincided directly

⁹⁷⁸ Barnes, “Reconciling Enemies,” 196.

with their social context. If it is assumed that Ray Davey, through the work of Corrymeela, introduced this concept into the Northern Ireland context and it was then taken by those at the local level and adapted, it could be said that reconciliation was not a lofty theological concept that was placed upon the culture but instead was a theological belief that was first seen through the lives of those living in a violent society. This led me to believe that the theology of reconciliation could be placed in the realm of local theology, for as Robert Schreiter explains: “Rather than trying, in the first instance, to apply a received theology to a local context, this new kind of theology [local theology] began with an examination of the context itself.”⁹⁷⁹

This understanding of local theology is not a new concept, and most of the current introduction to theology textbooks would have a section that referenced it.⁹⁸⁰ The local theology sections oftentimes offer articles on similar theological understandings between them. For example, if we look at *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*,⁹⁸¹ listed under the section “Confessing Jesus Christ in Context” are articles concerning Latin American, African American, Feminist, Hispanic, and Asian theology. Likewise, in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*⁹⁸² there is a section on “particularising theology” which includes articles on Feminist, Black Liberation, Latin American Liberation, African, South Asian, East Asian and Postcolonial theology.

It seems strange, therefore, that the theology of reconciliation has not been placed beside these local theologies in textbooks. Perhaps this is because of the lack of study on the subject as well as the myriad of definitions that accompany a description of a theology of reconciliation.

⁹⁷⁹ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 4.

⁹⁸⁰ Schreiter discusses the fact that there are some ambiguities between understandings of local, contextual translation and adaptation theology though they seem to share similar defining concepts. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 15-6.

⁹⁸¹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

⁹⁸² David F. Ford with Rachel Muers, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* (repr. 2005, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

While the “stew”⁹⁸³ of words that are associated with reconciliation creates confusion for theologians, this seems all the more reason to place the theology in an area of study that emphasises the importance of contextual nuances on theological development. So, where Liberation Theology has been adapted to various contexts and defined in different ways, the theology of reconciliation has been relegated to an “undefined, ill-defined, or idiosyncratically defined”⁹⁸⁴ corner that few theologians desire to explore.

With an understanding that it is those at the local level that should be creating understandings of the theology of reconciliation, as this is how local theology is determined according to Robert Schreiter, those who are studying the theology of reconciliation need only to study the ways the social context has influenced theological concepts of truth, justice, forgiveness and repentance as interpreted by those who are living in a particular context.⁹⁸⁵ As Schreiter argues: “In the development of local theologies, the professional theologian serves as an important resource, helping the community to clarify its own experience and to relate it to the experience of other communities past and present. Thus the professional theologian has an indispensable but limited role.”⁹⁸⁶

It is, perhaps, the frustration of a lack of concrete theological understandings of the horizontal aspect of reconciliation, which does not have the luxury of a seminal text such as Liberation Theology’s Gustavo Gutiérrez⁹⁸⁷ that has kept it from being placed in the category of local theology. It seems there is imaginative work still to be done to help clarify this area of theology within specific social contexts such as Northern Ireland. Further explanation on the subject will also, inevitably, pull the theology of reconciliation out of a soft theological category

⁹⁸³ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59.

⁹⁸⁴ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59.

⁹⁸⁵ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 16-8.

⁹⁸⁶ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 18.

⁹⁸⁷ See Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation, 32.

as it has been described in the past, most famously by The *Kairos* Theologians.⁹⁸⁸ Both clarity and legitimacy are two aspects of the theology of reconciliation that will require further studies.

If there could be a better understanding of the theology of reconciliation, as defined by those at the local level, there seemingly could be a move towards implementing reconciling and liberating tendencies on a larger scale. For as Joseph Liechty argued, “Neither good understanding of reconciliation nor still less good practice will be entirely stymied by weak conceptualisation, of course. But sometimes confusion does distort practice, and both understanding and practice would be enhanced by a better grasp of the whole network of actions and qualities that make up reconciliation.”⁹⁸⁹ At the moment, the work of the reconciliation communities does not necessarily reach a large section of the general public. Though this does not cast doubt upon their influence to their local community, it does imply that there is room for programmes that reach a wider constituency.

It seems as though additional reconciliation communities and possibly Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should be studied in order to bring together a more comprehensive view on the subject of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Whereas the governmental view on reconciliation was widely publicised and likewise widely discredited, the understanding of reconciliation at a local level was largely ignored. This study shows that even two reconciliation communities, both Christian in nature, have differing views on the theology of reconciliation based upon their demographics, geography and history. Therefore, there is an opportunity for future research into the ways that other reconciliation communities define reconciliation, as well as those who are participating in NGOs. This would offer an understanding of reconciliation from the bottom-up which could lead to a greater respect for the

⁹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two: The Theology of Reconciliation, 34.

⁹⁸⁹ Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place,” 59-60.

concept of reconciliation as well as a more socially specific means by which to apply the theology of reconciliation in outreach and programmes.

Along with an understanding of how the theology of reconciliation has been influenced corporately by the social context, there is also the question of how individuals have been influenced theologically. In addition to being a part of the corporate vision of the reconciliation communities used in this research, the individual members of Cornerstone and Corrymeela offered insight into what drew them to the work of reconciliation. Oftentimes the interviewee's interest in reconciliation goes against the odds of what would be a typical response to social aspects such as violence, inequality, segregation and tribalism. Further study could be explored in the area of personal motivations towards the theology of reconciliation, as there seemed to be similar contextual scenarios with those interviewed. These scenarios included: work-study abroad, coming from a mixed background, growing up as an outsider in an area, discussing acts of violence as they occur and witnessing-experiencing violence and inequality. These individual social events could be a means by which, on one hand, cross-community education is crafted. On the other hand it could also be used as a means of exploring how acts of violence and inequality are discussed both publicly and privately.

Finally, a clearer understanding of the theology of reconciliation in Northern Ireland might prove to be beneficial on an international scale, as other contexts could pick up on elements of this theology and create a unique understanding of their own. An example of this is most notably seen in the elements of Latin American Liberation Theology that were echoed by Black theologians in North America. If those in Northern Ireland, with their continued issues of intra-national conflict were able to find some type of inspiration within reconciliation, whether it be an emphasis on liberating or reconciling tendencies, perhaps there is a way for others who

have suffered similarly to adopt the rich concepts of truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness in their own way. This could lead to a unique tapestry of understandings of the theology of reconciliation that acknowledge the specific social situations within countries, yet still operates under the umbrella of the interactions amongst truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness. Reconciliation, like Liberation Theology, could become an important tool in positive changes to the social condition by introducing a theological idea that looks to balance liberating and reconciling beliefs in a way whereby people can maintain peace and likewise establish a claim for justice and truth that is taken seriously by the social context.

Further study, therefore, would mean examining the historical social contexts of areas like South Africa and South-North Korea that were offered as examples in this research. With a historical background in hand, it would be necessary to examine the theology of reconciliation at a modern day, local level and note the changes using the Theology of Reconciliation Model. In the South African context this might mean talking with those who were amongst the *Kairos* theologians. Has their theology changed since the 1980s when they first discussed their desire for reconciliation through an emphasis on liberating tendencies? If so, what has changed socially that would merit this move? With this in hand, it could be possible to offer insight into the elements within the social context that cause imbalance in reconciliation and likewise what could be embraced, liberating or reconciling, that might result in a balanced view of reconciliation that fully pursues freedom and peace. In the North-South Korean example, there might be an examination of the current state of violence between the two areas, as their emphasis on reconciling tendencies seemed to correspond with the Northern Ireland desire for stability. If those who were a part of the National Council of Churches felt as though the

situation was stable enough to pursue truth and justice, there might be a move towards a more balanced understanding of the theology of reconciliation within this context.

Original Contributions

To summarise this research I would like to make clear the original contributions to the field that I have made. First, I have taken the works of previous authors within the field of practical theology and created a new way of examining the social context and its influence on a theology of reconciliation. I have used both the historical social context and the current social context of the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Community to offer insights into the way that these Communities have expressed their theology of reconciliation throughout their respective histories. By using an original chart on the theology of reconciliation, and the previously mentioned information on social contexts, I was able to come to a conclusion about the elements of the social that were influencing the theological within each Community. Accordingly, I will now be able to return back to the Communities in order to show my findings and evaluate their current work in the Northern Ireland context. This awareness could shape the future of the programmes within both of the Communities. Lastly, I have suggested that the theology of reconciliation be placed under the heading of local theology alongside theological understandings such as Liberation, Black, and Feminist Theology and examined in different contexts such as South Africa and North-South Korea. I have also recommended that in order for the theology of reconciliation to be taken as seriously as these local theologies, there must be more work done in defining and understanding the concepts that are used to describe reconciliation.

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INTERVIEWS BY AUTHOR

All interviews took place in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom.

The Corrymeela Community

Emma Cowan: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic-Protestant, Faith and Life Worker.
Interview: 28 August 2009, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast.

Ciara McFarlane: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic, Secondary Schools Worker.
Interview: 26 June 2009, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast.

Ronnie Millar: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic-Protestant, Ballycastle Centre Director.
Interview: 17 May 2009, 5 Drumaroan Road, Ballycastle.

Yvonne Naylor: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Member of Corrymeela and Former Schools Worker.
Interview: 24 June 2009, 29 Upper Malone Rd. Belfast.

David Stevens: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Corrymeela Leader.
Interview: 20 March 2009, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast.

Jo Watson: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Fund-Raising Director.
Interview: 10 July 2009, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast.

The Cornerstone Community

Sam Bright: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Member of Cornerstone.
Interview: 17 July 2009, 95 Botanic Avenue, Belfast.

Sam Burch: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Member of Cornerstone and Former Leader.
Interview: 20 August 2009, Home Address, Newcastle.

Gerardine Connolly: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic, Member of Cornerstone.
Interview: 2 June 2009, 445 Springfield Rd., Belfast.

Paddy Connolly: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic, Member of Cornerstone.
Interview: 2 June 2009, 445 Springfield Rd., Belfast.

Tom Hannon: Born in Northern Ireland, Catholic, Member of Cornerstone and Former Leader.
Interview: 2 April, 2009, 445 Springfield Rd., Belfast.

Isabel Hunter: Born in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Member of Cornerstone.
Interview: 10 July 2009, 445 Springfield Rd., Belfast.

Gerry Reynolds: Born in the Republic of Ireland, Catholic, Member of Cornerstone.
Interview: 1 June 2009, Clonard Gardens, Belfast.

Forthspring Inter-Community Group

Johnston Price: Good Relations Co-ordinator.
Interview: 16 July 2009, 373 Springfield Road, Belfast.

APPENDIX ONE

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some of your first memories from growing up in Northern Ireland?
2. Describe the community in which you grew up.
 - Geographical?
 - Time period?
 - Demographics?
 - Economics?
3. What was your family life like growing up?
 - Who made up your household and what were they like?
 - Daily activities?
 - Household rules?
 - Was the situation in Northern Ireland discussed often in your household?
If so, in what manner?
 - How did these discussions affect your view on “the other”?
4. In this community setting, what did you do for social activity growing up?
 - What were your friends like?
 - What activities?
 - Were these activities segregated?
 - What was your view on the “other” during this time?
 - Did you ever interact with the other during this time?
 - What other aspects of your life were obviously segregated?
 - Was your school segregated?
5. Describe your school growing up.
 - Did you have teachers/lessons that stand out to you?
 - Was your school religious-based? Do you feel as though this influenced what was being taught significantly?
6. Aside from education, what role did religion and religious life play in your childhood and adolescence?
 - Was your family active in the church?
 - Describe your memories of church.
 - Are there lessons/activities that stick out to you?
 - What did it mean to you to be Catholic/Protestant?
7. Continuing with the idea of church life, how was your church/congregation affected by the Troubles?
 - What role did your church in your community play amidst such a conflict?
 - How was the “other” discussed in this situation?
 - How did the church handle situations where members of the congregation were killed/injured/jailed?

8. Did you yourself have people close to you who were killed/injured/jailed?
-How did this affect your thoughts on the “other?”
9. Looking back on your life within the time of the Troubles what are some of the influential events or people that stick out the most in your mind?
-Political events/people?
-Social?
-Religious?
-Do you feel as if these people/events led you to the area of reconciliation? If so, how?
10. Based upon your personal history as we have discussed and your current status within a reconciliation community, what do you see as the connection between being a Christian and working in the area of reconciliation?
-Describe this connection in detail.
-Do you see living in Northern Ireland as strengthening this idea for you? How?
11. How did you choose the Community in which you currently work?
12. Briefly describe the Community and its involvement with the local context (social/political/economical/cultural).
13. How does the Community adjust to the needs of the changing setting in Northern Ireland?
-What are some examples of these changes?
14. What is your role as a member/worker/leader of this Community?
-Main duties?
-Decision making process?
-Conflict resolution?
15. Describe your Community’s programmes.
-What is your role during these events?
-What are the themes?
-What are the activities?
16. In what ways do you feel as though the Community is relevant to what is going on in the local context?
17. Are there any meetings that stick out to you as being particularly significant in your work at the Community?
-Describe this scenario
18. Other than this particular event, have there been moments of self-revelation from working in the Community? If so, what were they and what was the scenario?
-What insights did you glean from them?
19. How do you feel as though working in this group has changed you?
20. What is your personal vision of reconciliation for Northern Ireland?
21. Do you believe there will ever be a time when reconciliation communities are no longer necessary in Northern Ireland? If so, is this in any future you can foresee?

APPENDIX TWO

Research Ethics Declarations

ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Consent Form for personal data to be used for research

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Research project, the details of which are below.

Research Project name: Theology of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

Name of researcher: Leah Robinson

Researcher's Contact details: L.E.Robinson@sms.ed.ac.uk, 07939967060

Scope of the project: This project examines the way a local context may influence the development of a theology of reconciliation while using the case study of Northern Ireland reconciliation communities and their workers/leaders. The method of gathering this information is through examining key events and people in a person's history. It will also examine the way this concept occurs on a community level through participant observation. This project is for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Edinburgh. The information gathered will be used for the completion of the researcher's final project and may also be used in academic journals or presentations. The raw data (recordings, notes) will only be available to the researcher and the researcher's advisor, Dr. Cecelia Clegg.

Confidentiality

(The researcher will indicate how confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved)

- All personal quotes will be cleared with interviewee prior to being used by the researcher.
- At any point, the interviewee has the right to edit a response.
- Persons may choose to not answer any question at any time.
- Persons may stop the interview at any time.
- Persons may request anonymity.
- Persons have a right to request a copy of the final project upon completion.

Anonymity

If you have chosen to remain anonymous, is it possible for the researcher to use any, or all, of the following distinctions to describe you:

- Gender _____
- Age _____
- Occupation _____
- Community _____
- Religious Affiliation _____

Sam Bright

2

- b. Church of Ireland
c. Presbyterian
d. Methodist
e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES ☒ NO ☐

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. YES ☒ NO ☐

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Samuel John Bright
17/7/2009

Sam Burch

2

- b. Church of Ireland
c. Presbyterian
d. Methodist
e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: SBurch

Date: 20/8/09

Paddy and Gerardine Connolly

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above YES✓ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Paddy Connolly / Gerardine Connolly

Date: 02/06/09

Emma Cowan

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other RC + C of I

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Emma Cowan

Date: 28th Aug 09

Tom Hannon

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: T. Hannon

Date: April 2nd 2009

Isabel Hunter

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Isabel Hunter

Date: 10 July 2009

Ciara McFarlane

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Ciara McFarlane

Date: 26/6/09

Ronnie Millar

2

- b. Church of Ireland
c. Presbyterian
d. Methodist
e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Ronnie Millar

Date: 17 May 2009

Yvonne Naylor

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES ☒ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above YES ☒ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Yvonne Naylor

Date: 24/06/09

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above. ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: _____ *J Price*

Date: 16/4/09.

Gerry Reynolds

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. ☒ YES ☐ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above ☒ YES ☐ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Gerry Reynolds

Date: 1-6-2009

David Stevens

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES ☒ NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above YES ☒ NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: RD Stevens

Date: 20th March 2009

Jo Watson

2

- b. Church of Ireland
- c. Presbyterian
- d. Methodist
- e. Other _____

Please complete the following:

I consent to participating in this research project and understand that I may withdraw at any time. YES NO

I consent to my personal data, as outlined below, being held for use in the research project detailed above YES NO

Description of personal data to be used for research:

1. Information gathered through personal interviewing.
2. Observation of group activities.

Signature: Jo Watson

Date: 10.7.09